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May 1992
Number 23

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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Joyce A. Little

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Paul V. Mankowski

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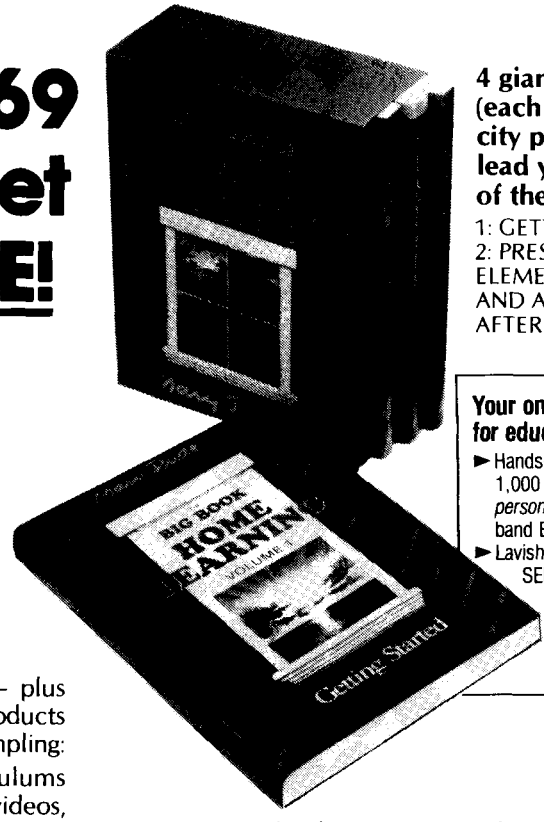

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

MAY 1992 • NUMBER 23

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FIRST THINGS

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The AIDS Debate

Although basically an enthusiastic reader of FIRST THINGS, I find the editors' incessant bashing of the liberal straw man somewhat tedious. At times it seems that polemical zeal overtakes astute social commentary. One prime example of this [unfortunate] manner of social analysis can be found in the editorial "AIDS: Deadly Confusions Compounded" (February). It's hard to know exactly what the editorial's point is: to malign Magic Johnson's character, reaffirm George Bush's competence in domestic affairs, expose those nefarious and ubiquitous hippie left-overs who have infiltrated every organization in American society except the Republican Party, or maybe, incidentally, to offer some insight into the problem of AIDS.

If the point of your article is to *criticize the AIDS lobby for ignoring* the ethical dimensions of this social malady, or to criticize the moral philosophy that compels AIDS activists to hand out condoms in public high schools instead of emphasizing the importance of chastity and self-discipline, then you should be commended. Unfortunately, if that is your point it has been obscured behind several layers of unnecessary and uninteresting diatribe. The best illustration of what I mean can be found in those three motives you blithely attribute to those "who orchestrate the AIDS campaign": "to rescue the sexual revolution," "to gain social acceptance of homosexuality," and "to transcend morality altogether." I don't know if these conclusions are based on some unknown statistical information or merely keen intuition. I suspect they're based on neither. At any rate, not only are such allegations extremely dubious, but also because of their fantastic character, they undermine the credibility of the editorial. I suggest in the future you contain some of that neoconservative zeal and just work to communicate your fundamental insights.

David Baer
Candler School of Theology
Atlanta, GA

I am writing to express my profound disappointment at the tone and content of your editorial statement on AIDS. I am very deeply disturbed by the thinly veiled bigotry that underlies the whole piece. It has a negative tone that serves only to support attitudes of prejudice against those who suffer from the disease. Rather than a fair criticism of what you perceive to be the overzealousness of some of the people involved in advocating for the cause of AIDS, it is a bitter and unwarranted attack against what you refer to as the "AIDS Lobby."

As a hospital chaplain I work directly with people who have AIDS and their loved ones.... Additionally, I am a certified HIV instructor for the American Red Cross. Though by no means an expert on AIDS, I have more than a casual knowledge of and interest in the subject. I also have a deep commitment to advocating for an attitude of compassion for those who suffer because of AIDS. I am hence very sensitive to what I perceive to be attitudes of callousness toward the victims of this disease. I am also concerned by what I feel to be the dangerous hardening of hearts toward those with AIDS in statements such as your editorial.

You refer to "the ill-disguised connection between AIDS transmission and the 'gay lifestyle.' " The implication here is that there is something unique about the lifestyle of gays that is connected to the transmission of AIDS. In fact, on a worldwide basis, AIDS is present more in the heterosexual community than it is in the gay community. In the U.S. there has been widespread promiscuity in the gay community that has been a factor in the spread of AIDS. It is not the nature of this activity as gay that has been the problem, but rather the nature of it as sexual....

It is not so much important that

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we belittle or deny the fact that AIDS has spread dramatically in the homosexual community. What is important is that we help people understand that all promiscuous sexual behavior puts them at risk. . . . It does not matter what sexual preference a person has in terms of his/her vulnerability to AIDS when practicing sexual activity. It is dangerous to imply there is. Indeed, it is irresponsible to do so. . . .

You seem to imply that because AIDS is behavior-specific this somehow makes it less deserving of our response than other forms of suffering. Well, lung cancer is in many cases behavior-specific. A lot of it is caused by smoking. . . . One can go a step further and argue smoking is a sinful behavior (it does defile the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit). Yet we do not go to cancer wards preaching to the victims of lung cancer about their sinful lifestyles. . . . Could it be that the weight of our moral judgments is clouded by the fact that a lot of conservatives smoke (smoking can even cause harm to nonsmokers who are unwilling breathers of the cancer-causing substance)? Could it be we are biased and selective in our moral judgments? With the victims of lung cancer we have the good sense to respond at the point of human suffering rather than the point of moral judgment. For some reason, we seem unable to do that with AIDS.

In the face of human suffering the moral character of the sufferer is irrelevant to the demand of the gospel for a compassionate response. Our Lord reminds us that whatever we do to the least of those who suffer we do to Him. His statement applies to all, not just a select few. . . .

Your editorial speaks the sad story of hearts long since devoid of compassion and filled rather with hate and bitterness. Your editorial betrays fear that leads to prejudice and bigotry rather than compassion and understanding. Your editorial divides instead of unites; it tears apart instead of heals. . . .

(The Rev.) John G. Anderson
Savannah, GA

Your editorial on the AIDS epidemic has much to commend it but also some significant medical distortions.

Your article suggested that AIDS is rarely transmitted heterosexually and is "declining among all risk categories." The truth is that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is spread by all forms of penetrative sexuality. Only about 6 percent of Americans with AIDS acquired the virus heterosexually, but this is up from 3 percent only a few years ago. The World Health Organization estimates that three-fourths of HIV-infected people in the world acquired the virus heterosexually. Moreover, the just-released report of the Centers for Disease Control (*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report,* Vol. 41, #28) shows that there are several groups in which AIDS is increasing, including heterosexuals, women, infants, and adolescents. Although the disease is not progressing as quickly as many experts feared, this is primarily due to earlier diagnosis and treatment with drugs such as AZT that prolong the asymptomatic period before the HIV-infected person develops full-blown AIDS.

I agree that groups with a vested interest in maintaining the New Morality have used AIDS to push their own agendas and will thereby increase the death toll. They have perpetuated myths about the efficacy of condoms, the inability of teenagers to abstain, and the notion that morality has nothing to do with the AIDS epidemic. But AIDS is a serious disease that will result in a million deaths of young people in the next decade and so is not insignificant. Perhaps by trying to balance some of the AIDS hysteria ("everyone is at risk of contracting it"), you have swung too far in the other direction.

Glen G. Wood, M.D.
Austin, TX

Thank you for "AIDS: Deadly Confusions Compounded." I do think, however, that you missed an opportunity to set forth an important difference between AIDS and other diseases as confronted by Christians.

Precisely: AIDS is a behavior-linked disease, and the particular behavior is extraordinarily painful for many Christians to confront. This makes AIDS the opportunity it is for the Church to contrast its own foundation with secular points of view.

The secular world, lacking any vocabulary of mercy, is forced into mendacity. It knows only the publicist's way to justify attention to any particular disease: exaggeration of its size and terrors. The Church, on the other hand, knows perfectly well that diseases *all* affect *only* sinners. This is an outrage to those who have to connive and compete for attention on the basis of deserving (the victim ploy) or threat (the scare ploy directed at heterosexuals).

The Church is constantly confronting sin and disease with love, but this is not obvious to outsiders. Alas, even in the pews there are plenty who believe that we are loved and love each other because we are so lovable. AIDS presents an opportunity to smash that illusion. Here we have a plague that, unlike those of the Middle Ages, *is* transmitted by bad behavior. The great *nevertheless* which we oppose to this of all diseases makes no sense except as a preachment of Christ's mercy. That, its age-old evangelistic task, and not numbers or threats to ourselves, is the reason for the Church to be seen confronting AIDS.

Unfortunately, the churches are often heard repeating the secular line, because they mistake it for Christian charity. In so doing, they undermine their effectiveness, and betray serious misunderstandings within the community of faith.

Thomas Drew
Ventura, CA

I was distressed to see that in your otherwise excellent editorial on AIDS you perpetuated the myth that heterosexual AIDS is a "myth." Having spent the past three years (up until August 1991) working in the public health department of a Florida city, I can assure you that AIDS can be transmitted through heterosexual intercourse, and that it in fact *is* being so transmitted at an increasing rate. In 1990, nearly a third of our newly

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diagnosed HIV cases were detected on routine screening of pregnant women. The majority of these women contracted the disease *not* by intravenous drug abuse, but from their infected boyfriends and husbands. We also saw a number of male HIV cases whose only risk factor was *heterosexual* promiscuity.

Your editorial states that "the epidemic is declining among all risk categories." This is far from true. To quote from a recent report by Surgeon General Novella in *The Female Patient* (January 1992), "Women and perinatally infected children represent the fastest growing subgroup with the disease. More than 19,000 American women have AIDS, and over half of these cases have been reported in the past two years. Women now account for almost 12 percent of U.S. AIDS cases, as compared with 2 percent in the early years of the epidemic." I would suggest that your sources of information, particularly Michael Fumento's *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS,* are hopelessly out of date and inappropriate to a discussion of the AIDS epidemic as it is developing in the 1990s.

To say that AIDS can be transmitted heterosexually is by no means to accept the lie that "everyone is (equally) at risk" for AIDS. It only makes it all the more urgent for young people to be told the truth that sexual promiscuity, whether homosexual or heterosexual, may endanger their lives, that condoms are by no means a foolproof way to avoid that risk, and that chastity is the best defense. As concerned parents, as doctors and health care workers, we should insist that at least this minimum truth be taught to our children.

Paul C. Fox, M.D.
Farmington, PA

I have been following the slow and arduous acceptance of author Michael Fumento's central thesis presented in his book *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* and in his series of articles in *The New Republic* and in *Commentary* with great interest. . . . So I was extremely pleased to read your editorial position concerning AIDS.

The central point in Mr. Fumento's findings is that vaginal intercourse is a barrier preventing the outbreak of the disease into the general population. Receptive anal sex is the primary vehicle for AIDS transmission, a fact that is mysteriously missing from AIDS literature and related public service advertisements. Homosexuals, in their quest for total social acceptance of their purported "lifestyle," simply cannot tolerate the idea that anal sex is somehow qualitatively different from vaginal intercourse. To allow for this would impugn the supposed equality of sexual "preference." . . .

One small problem I have with your editorial stance is that there is no mention of the conservative movement's involvement in perpetuating the hysteria surrounding AIDS for the purpose of promoting abstinence. As a conservative and a Christian, I think it is unfortunate that conservatives have been so eager to buy into the idea that "we are all in it together." Well-meaning conservatives, while trying to encourage young people to behave as they should, have lost the moral high ground in the AIDS debate, and regaining that ground will be exceedingly difficult. Unfortunately, fear of death, no matter how effective as a tool for social engineering, is not the proper moral grounds for virtue. . . .

My suspicion is that many conservatives have simply not realized or accepted the fact that we live in a post-Christian society where Christian values are commonly viewed as antithetical to everything progressive. Children have been consistently taught, directly and indirectly, that the true picture of reality is that there is no transcendence and no absolute besides mere matter in motion. So to call for abstinence, and to expect that it would have any meaning to those it's directed to, is simply to operate on a memory of a world that no longer exists.

Sean R. Gerety
New Milford, CT

The Editors reply:

From these and other responses, it is obvious that the AIDS editorial, as intended, struck a nerve. Good points are made in the several letters. We are sorry Mr. Baer did not understand the purpose of the editorial, which we thought obvious. We hope to discourage the cruel exploitation of concern about AIDS, an exploitation that results in, inter alia, more people contracting the disease. If Mr. Baer is not familiar with individuals and groups who vigorously promote the goals of the AIDS lobby as described in the editorial, perhaps Atlanta is more culturally isolated than we have reason to believe is the case. Without entering into intramural disputes about precise data, we note that Michael Fumento is a widely respected authority on the AIDS epidemic and is constantly updating his argument with the latest evidence. Mr. Anderson protests that sexual promiscuity of any sort, whether homosexual or heterosexual, puts people at risk. Of course we have no argument with that, as a careful reading of the editorial makes unmistakably clear. It is harder to know how to respond to his charge that we lack compassion. Saying that we'll match his compassion any day seems a little juvenile. Trying to save people, especially young people, from sexual exploitation and exposure to a deadly disease strikes us as compassionate, if that is the required word for it. Mr. Anderson attributes to us the view that "because AIDS is behavior-specific this somehow makes it less deserving of our response than other forms of suffering." Not at all. We must respond by caring for those afflicted and, as our editorial attempted to do, by discouraging the behavior in question. We will leave it to others to assess the merits of the proposed analogy between cigarette smoking and the transmission of AIDS.

Animal Rights?

In understandable enthusiasm for their cause, animal advocates, like animal researchers, sometimes seem

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to believe that the ends justify any means, and Thomas Derr's "Animal Rights, Human Rights" (February) contains cogent arguments against a number of the positions and practices of animal advocacy. But it also contains a surprising assessment of the movement as a unidirectional and nearly unanimous force headed for failure because of its lack of "forthright anthropocentrism." One would expect a professor of religion and biblical literature to discourse upon the relationship between humans and animals from a predominantly theocentric, not anthropocentric, perspective. One would also expect to find in the discourse due mention of the increasing number of animal defenders who are of religious persuasion and of the fact that the defense of animals, when carried out with scrupulous fairness, has been seen as a spiritual issue inseparable from human obligation to the divine ethic.

Professor Derr seems unaware that to further their cause, animal advocates need not minimize the differences between humans and animals. On the contrary, precisely because we *are* superior and unique, we have a mind and a conscience enabling us to understand that it is our evolutionary duty always to treat animals well because of their sentience and the moral demands it makes upon us.

Although maintaining that the concept of rights applies only to human relations and that therefore animals have none, Professor Derr admits that we must [treat] them with a responsible stewardship and that the things we do to them should be limited by "a realistic anthropocentrism, and inhere in decisions about what is useful and valuable to humanity." This sweeping anthropocentric position then leads him to the conclusion that it is permissible, if not desirable, to breed and keep animals for our food, work, and pleasure, and he approves, in particular, of their use in medical research and even in the testing of cosmetics that are to be marketed. But all this animal exploitation is to be conducted with kindness and sympathy. . . .

Two questions come immediately to mind: (1) whether real human kindness and sympathy are, or can be, encountered in the slaughterhouse, in the circus and the rodeo, in the forced captivity of wild animals in zoos, and in pain research in biomedical laboratories, and (2) whether our abuse and destruction of members of other sentient species for our benefit alone can be a truly moral goal for mankind.

In my opinion, treatment of animals based upon the kind of anthropocentrism that Thomas Derr recommends is wholly inappropriate for this age of spiritual awakening. More environmentally sensitive to the plight of the biosphere than ever before, man is now seeking the theocentric perspective that alone can provide him with the sense of justice, compassion, and harmony to facilitate the evolution of the whole of sentient life.

Catherine Roberts
Berkeley, CA

May I please suggest some supplementary material in reference to Thomas S. Derr's cogent article?

According to the natural law tradition, a right is a spiritual entitlement, a moral power to do (e.g., to walk in one's garden), hold (e.g., to keep a family heirloom), or exact something (e.g., to demand the payment of a debt). Rights are rooted in a person's spiritual component, his human life-principle. Everyone has the duty to achieve his destiny. Consequently, he possesses a legitimate claim to the means to do so. By way of example, a person has the right to bodily integrity, since its absence would frustrate him in his quest for happiness.

Let it be said forthrightly: animals have no rights whatsoever. Purely material beings have no spiritual prerogatives. Does this mean we may abuse animals at will? Hardly. Animals are God's creatures. (St. Francis of Assisi was especially conscious of that truth.) The moral law strictly limits our dominion over animal life. It obliges us to deal with animals in a reasonable fashion, carefully refraining from causing them unnecessary pain.

It is perhaps misleading for Professor Derr to indicate that "babies have rights because they have human potential." Who will deny that babies are completely human, despite their lack of mental and physical development? An infant in a bassinet has as many actual rights as a metaphysician or a prizefighter. To be sure, he may not exercise some of his rights, such as his religious freedom, until he is capable of mature reasoning.

Kenneth F. Slattery, C.M.
St. John's University
Jamaica, NY

Thomas Derr's article was on target in every way. As the author of several articles taking on the same issue in the Jewish press, I can add that there are real First Amendment religious rights infringements at stake, at least with regard to Judaism. By extension, this applies to all religions. . . .

In brief, the prohibition of the use of animals would eliminate the production and use of: Torah scrolls (the Bible); tefillin (phylacteries—leather/sinew/hide parchment device required by men for daily praying); mezuzahs (hide parchment of prayer required on every doorpost); shofars (ram's horn used as part of the requirement for repentance between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur—the highest Jewish Holy days); use of meat meals in the celebration of other holidays; and much more. These rites are mandated by Torah Law and are binding on Jews. In none of these cases are substitute materials allowed. Prohibitions of these rites would be substantial infringements, abrogating the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

Two animal rights [activists] stated [to me] that if Judaism cannot accommodate (their definition of) animal rights, it will have to be changed by government force. . . . Further claims used demonic representations of Judaism normally found in Nazi literature or medieval blood libels. In one public TV program, [the activists] stated that they would rather

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see animals live than save one human life. . . .

While Judaism contains the oldest known humane limits on the use of animals (e.g., harming an animal is punishable, slaughter must be painless, they must be fed before one's children, they are to rest on the Sabbath, etc.), it does not eliminate animals for use as food, manufacture, or for ritual. These uses are for Jews, literally, G-d's no-appeal commandments. Animal rights [advocates] seek not merely to [make animals equal to humans], but to subordinate human religious rights.

Alan Hoffman
East Windsor, NJ

Thomas Derr replies:

I thank Messrs. Hoffman and Slattery for their support, and hasten to assure Fr. Slattery that I, too, believe that babies have rights equal to adults. My point was that they may not be denied those rights even if, in some respects, they may not seem as developed as some of the higher animals, because rights belong to the whole human species, and thus to all its members.

Catherine Roberts asks me, as a matter of my vocation as a teacher of religion, to view animals from a theocentric, not anthropocentric, perspective. But it is just because I have taught religion for so many years that I do not think I can say how God would view this world. I would be wary of anyone who claimed such knowledge. All I think we can say, speaking from within the biblical tradition, is that we are called to care for the whole of creation including the animals in it, not because they are sentient, or because they possess any other particular property, but simply because they are God's creatures. Some of the examples she cites may well violate the principle of faithful care, the kindness that I, too, would require. But I will not link rights to properties. That is both unconvincing and dangerous, as our experience with the defense of *human* rights should surely have taught us by now.

True Jewish Confessions

I hope Stephen Miller feels better now that he has gotten that off his chest ("Confessions of a Rootless Cosmopolitan Jew," February).

Miller's problem is not a Jewish problem, nor is his problem his life as a Jew. He is certainly not a Jew in any significant sense, as he would be the first to say. Rather, Miller's problem, or non-problem, would better be described as that of a "rootless cosmopolitan intellectual-aesthete." In this he joins the vast, modern European—now worldwide—communion that cuts across all religions. It includes innumerable intellectuals, novelists, poets, journalists, *feinschmeckers,* litterateurs, and solipsists.

On the other hand, Miller cannot claim to join that illustrious and small band of cosmopolitan Jews for whom their own Jewishness precipitated a crisis, from either external or internal causes, or both. This group includes in its ranks extraordinary individuals such as Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Leo Strauss, and even Primo Levi. Each of these individuals embarked on an essentially Jewish quest brought about by the accident or providence of his birth. For Miller, there is neither crisis nor quest, merely a need to salve in public his delicate conscience. Of course, it is unfair to compare Miller to such remarkable persons, but then it is unfair of Miller to trade on a "Jewish" problem he doesn't have.

Mr. Miller's very conception of religious spirituality is not Jewish, but an aestheticized Christianity. Jewish religious life is intensely communal and revolves around deeds, prayer, and lifelong study. It is the "way" of the Jews. A self-administered short course in Judaism will not serve.

Mr. Miller, however, is a solitary and too fastidious to connect or commit beyond family to communal life (except when it comes to placing aging parents in institutions run by the Jewish community). Miller prefers moments of transcendence, presumably epiphanies, preferably through art, especially music. I suppose Leonard Bernstein could have been a priest in this communion, someone who composed Masses and Kaddishes alike. As Miller observes, it is easier to believe in God than to practice religion.

Still, Mr. Miller wishes us to understand that he has serious regard for religion, particularly Christianity, and that he was drawn to it especially after his short course in Judaism. But while the continuing survival of the Jews and its meaning is a theological puzzlement for Christianity, it is not for Miller. . . . So Christianity, for which Miller has a high regard, perforce takes seriously the faith of Mr. Miller's fathers, while he himself cannot.

I hope that Mr. Miller solves his problem, but please, I wish he would not involve the Jews in his own *meshugas.*

Robert A. Licht
Silver Spring, MD

Steven Miller's "Confessions of a Rootless Cosmopolitan Jew" would be more appropriate on a psychiatrist's couch than in a serious journal of religion in public life. Mr. Miller is certainly rootless, perhaps cosmopolitan, but positively not Jewish. He trivializes his birthright and has abandoned all religious, philosophical, and ethical attachment to the Jewish people.

While admittedly never able to make a serious commitment to the principles of Judaism, he further trivializes other organized religious groups with his intellectual posture of belief, but admitted fear of commitment to any established faith.

He diminishes the commitment of FIRST THINGS with his whining prattle. Shame on your editors! Where is the intelligent voice of contemporary American Judaism in your publication? Serious Jewish scholars abound in this latter part of the twentieth century. Although we are a mere fragment of our ancient self, we nonetheless continue to contribute greatly to the intellectual religious thought of the world. If we are not to read that thought here, then

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what use is your journal? . . .

Larry M. Lefkowitz
North Potomac, MD

Confessions are usually meant for sin and Stephen Miller has ample reason to confess. In Hebrew, the term sin means to fall short. Mr. Miller falls short on serious thought and is long on self-serving rationalizations. The principle weakness in his confession is that he is intellectually lazy.

I wouldn't mind his laziness if he owned up to it and admitted that rediscovering and reclaiming a heritage is hard work that requires much time and effort. Instead he claims that Judaism did not have a strong enough appeal for him. How would he know? He claims to have read a few books on Judaism, which didn't move him. Imagine for a moment that an English student proclaimed that after reading the cliff notes on Macbeth, he deemed Shakespeare to be overrated. Such a student would be thrown out of class, not viewed as presenting a serious alternate viewpoint.

Understandably, Mr. Miller, and the legions of assimilated Jews whom he represents, is outraged that more committed Jews view him to be a posthumous victory for Hitler, but what should he be called? With his children, thousands of years of Jewish history ended. The six million martyrs of the Holocaust lost their Jewish identity at gunpoint. Mr. Miller lost his through laziness and his consequent Jewish illiteracy.

I suggest that Mr. Miller spend less time writing odes to his Jewish alienation and start on the lifelong task of learning Torah. Perhaps many years from now Mr. Miller will have something interesting to say.

Scott Shore
Silver Spring, MD

Stephen Miller replies:
Mr. Licht says that I availed myself of Jewish institutions for my parents while keeping myself at arm's length from Judaism. Sorry, but I could not find a nursing home for "intellectual-aesthetes" for my mother, so I found her a place at a Jewish nursing home, which is where she wanted to be. The rest of Mr. Licht's letter is incoherent and mean-spirited. If this is what "deeds, prayer, and lifelong study" do to one's mind and character, I'm glad I have not chosen this "way."

Mr. Lefkowitz says that I'm "positively not Jewish." I never claimed that I was. If being Jewish means practicing Judaism, then clearly I'm not Jewish. I only said that I was born into a Jewish family and received a Jewish upbringing.

Mr. Shore accuses me of intellectual laziness, but laziness is not what kept me from exploring Judaism in depth. Rather, it was intellectual indifference, as I made clear in my article. After having read some books on Judaism, I decided I was not interested in pursuing what he calls "the lifelong task of learning Torah." This confession should not be taken as a sign of any disrespect for Judaism. As I said, I lack the will to make a rediscovery of Judaism. Life is short, and I'd rather do other things.

Modernity Blues

Regarding Seth Williamson's "Blue Ridge Modernity Blues" (February), I certainly agree that the local school district was wrong to employ a counselor who used "nonjudgmental" language regarding stealing and drug use. As a gay Christian, however, I was concerned by the way Williamson freighted in the idea of homosexuality as a choice—hence subject to the same kind of moral decision-making as drug use or stealing.

I didn't "choose" to be gay; it's just the way I am. Perhaps Williamson meant that the decision to be *visibly* gay is a kind of choice. I'll wager that if he looks around Floyd County, Virginia, he'll find about as many homosexuals relative to the overall population as here in Cook County, Illinois, though the former are certainly obliged to hide it much better. (I know: I grew up in a southwestern Virginia hamlet much like the one Williamson describes.)

At any rate, the school counselor's moral reasoning on homosexuality wasn't any muddier than Williamson's. I would fault "Ms. Nouvelle," though, for implying that a young person in such an environment could choose to be visibly gay without risk. When teens in small towns do come out, they run the risk of abuse, ostracism, and sometimes a beating. Such are the sturdy pioneer values that Williamson advocates in his piece.

I wonder if I am the only reader to find Williamson's stance as offensive as Ms. Nouvelle's: here's an employee from the oh-so-liberal world of public radio who fled to the security of provincial life and, through a rather sophistical analysis, passes off as common decency, common bigotry.

Allen Smalling
Chicago, IL

In criticizing the "situational ethics" of a school counselor, Seth Williamson declares, "She suddenly develops a strange reluctance to say what all sane people know to be true: that illegal drugs are wrong. Not just unhealthy, or even dangerous, but wrong. Period."

The only absolute thing we can say about illegal drugs is that they are illegal. Just about every illegal drug can be used in a medicinal way, often with less danger from side effects or addiction than legal drugs. Illegal drugs may be used in religious rituals.

Since most people rely on some kind of substance to help them escape pain, to relax, or to socialize, the moral question is whether the immediate good outweighs the possible harm—something very specific to each situation. It is not the use of any substance but the abuse that is wrong.

The moral standards and parental guidance a counselor applies in her own home cannot morally be imposed on children who come from families with different religious backgrounds, moral standards, and family rituals.

The real moral irresponsibility is the way parents and society have abandoned the guidance and control of their children to professionals and

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institutions. Public counselors simply cannot do what should be done by families, churches, and communities. But as long as parents shirk their personal responsibilities, as long as there are children brutally abused, counselors and schools, courts and cops, will continue unsuccessfully trying to substitute for those who fail their primary responsibility.

Gene Lehman
Boring, OR

Seth Williamson replies:

"Ms. Nouvelle's" remark about homosexuality concerned a certain adult and not a student, a distinction that was unnecessary for the purposes of my piece.

As the 1986 Vatican "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" stated, the homosexual inclination is "ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil" and is therefore an "objective disorder." I believe this wise and nuanced document says something true about human nature; I'm afraid Mr. Smalling might label it "common bigotry."

For a while the notion that homosexuality was a "choice" (as in the phrase "sexual preference") was homosexual-movement orthodoxy; in recent years the correct line has been that it's somehow inherent. But there's little comfort for Mr. Smalling even if a predisposition to homosexuality is eventually shown to be genetic. Some studies have suggested that conditions such as alcoholism and schizophrenia may possess heritable components, but no one is (yet) claiming that either is desirable.

Furthermore, it is degrading to homosexuals to suppose that they lack free will and are, unlike heterosexuals, presumptive slaves to their sex drives. Whatever the true etiology of homosexuality, homosexuals still possess the dignity that derives from participation in what Josef Pieper called "the luminous domain of free human action." Father John Harvey states (in *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*) that some homosexuals may be victims of truly compulsive behavior and as such deserve our special sympathy and understanding; but even these unfortunate individuals, he notes, may exercise the choice to seek help.

I'm glad Mr Lehman agrees that parents shouldn't abandon their children's moral training to so-called professionals. But the usual problem is just the opposite: "professionals" who attempt to teach what parents strongly believe to be untruthful, stupid, or even wicked. That school prayer is wrong, for example, but illegal drugs aren't. Yes, some individuals may manage to use illegal drugs without paying that all too familiar price. But then some people can commit adultery and seemingly escape the consequences for years. Sorry, but I think anti-drug laws are firmly rooted in the realities of human nature.

Saving Notre Dame

In David W. Lutz's view ("Can Notre Dame Be Saved?" January), a religiously affiliated university has only two choices. It must remain an exclusivist Christian bastion (Calvin College, the University of Paris circa 1250), or it must inevitably slide into full-blown secularism. So he reads Notre Dame's future as grim. But Notre Dame is trying to break out of this pattern, to bring Christian scholarship into full dialogue with modern pluralistic intellectual life.

Take the matter of hiring. Yes, Notre Dame welcomes non-Christian professors. Yes, some of the Catholic majority on its faculty are purely nominal Catholics. But the administration does not just ask whether a potential professor can dig a baptismal certificate out of his baby-book. It pursues a serious "affirmative action" program for Catholics in particular and Christians in general. This is why Notre Dame has by far the largest proportion of serious and vocal Christians that I have ever encountered at a major university.

And consider (what first strikes an outsider from a really secular university) where Notre Dame commits its research and teaching efforts. It sustains, of course, work in the broad range of subjects one expects in any large university. But its largest departments are theology and philosophy of religion. The History Department emphasizes the history of religion. The Sociology Department stresses the sociology of the family (a traditional area of Catholic concern). The Medieval Institute—one of the University's jewels—concentrates on a period of clear import for Catholicism in particular and for the history and philosophy of religion in general. Again, the University does not see such subjects as exclusive Christian reservations but believes in bringing the Christian intellectual heritage back into the mainstream of American academic work.

Is Notre Dame always an easy and congenial place for Christian scholars? Of course not. Do all its teachers and scholars operate from a Christian perspective? Deliberately not. But there is a reason why Notre Dame has attracted and retained more Christian scholars of real eminence than any other American university, including such committed orthodox Protestants as Nathan Hatch, now Dean of the Graduate School; John Van Engen, Director of the Medieval Institute; and Alvin Plantinga, in Mr. Lutz's own department. Why, after all, did Mr. Lutz come to South Bend?

Notre Dame has committed itself to sustaining internally, and promoting externally, a dialogue between the contemporary pluralistic academy and Christianity. Further, Notre Dame is the only Catholic, indeed the only Christian, university with the resources and the will to make a run for real national eminence in that larger academic world. Its efforts falter; it makes mistakes; it has its share of pretension and puffery. And it is the most promising attempt in American higher education to recover Christian traditions for our common intellectual life.

James Turner
Professor of History
University of Michigan

David Lutz senses that "a battle for the soul is being waged at Notre

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Dame" and traces the devolution to the new deity, Academic Freedom.

Secular Humanism needs a secular virtue. Freedom is an attribute not found in the gospel. Jesus, like John the Baptist, taught subordination of the individual will to the will of God and urged repentance to those who engaged in illicit actions which violated that relationship.

The primary function of civil law is to limit freedom when an act impinges on the right of another individual or on the rights of society. Freedom by its very nature must be limited in order for civilization to prosper. The decline in education is in direct relationship to the decline in discipline. While we celebrate the freedom in Europe from tyranny we now worry about consequences that might lead to anarchy. And in all universities there are standards that impose limits. One doesn't put bestiality in the curriculum.

Would a modern Father Sorin be commended for founding a college for the purpose of inculcating students with the truths embodied in the magisterium? Not if the judges are the AAUP who censored Catholic University for terminating the services of Father Charles Curran. . . .

Everyone agrees that the function of a university is to teach truth. When the curriculum involves chemistry or mathematics, the religious identity of a teacher is irrelevant. But parents who entrust their son or daughter to the "care" of Notre Dame, do they have an implied right that involves trust? Is there not a difference in the predicates of a Catholic university and those who claim the right to teach any value free from the supervision of the authorities who hire them?. . .

Perhaps the criticism of David Lutz is rebutted by his own experience. It seems to me that Notre Dame has done an outstanding job not only of teaching him to think, but of building a perspective on the meaning of life. I suspect he is a better Methodist as a result.

Edward F. Halpin
Park Ridge, IL

Kudos to David W. Lutz on his insightful article concerning the future of the University of Notre Dame. As Catholics become more and more concerned with their personal identity, the ideals and morals of the Universal Church begin to disintegrate when faced with the "subjectivism, relativism, emotivism, and nihilism so much in fashion in Western democracies today." . . . If Catholicity at the university level is to remain, Notre Dame had better be prepared to save itself, whether from "secular humanism," a distorted view of academic freedom, or a goal of becoming [well-regarded] at the cost of its Catholic uniqueness. . . .

York A. Young
South Bend, IN

David W. Lutz replies:

Professor James Turner and I share a desire that Christian scholars influence the contemporary pluralistic academy. We disagree, however, concerning the most effective means of attaining this objective. He believes that a Christian university should itself become pluralistic. I maintain, for several reasons, that our policy should be one of uncompromising commitment to the truth of Christianity.

It would be impossible to represent within a single university more than a small fraction of the intellectual positions opposed to Christianity. And in an age of printed and electronic media and rapid transportation, Christian scholars at Christian universities can debate non-Christians at other universities. Certainly non-Christians at secular universities need not hire Christians in order to attack Christianity.

In addition to debating the opponents of Christianity, Christian universities should hand down their tradition to the next generation. Notre Dame professors, whether Christians or not, teach. And most teach far more students than do the distinguished Protestant scholars whom Prof. Turner mentions. If we believe Notre Dame cannot become a great Christian university without inviting hundreds of non-Christians to join its faculty, we have an obligation to tell prospective students that many of their professors will be non-Christians who were hired in order to give Christians an opportunity to debate positions opposed to Christianity.

Prof. Turner believes Notre Dame can remain indefinitely at some point between Christian commitment and complete secularism. But the fact that no Christian university has gone further down the road to secularism than Notre Dame has without going all the way should alert us to the dangers of present policies. Among my Christian critics are some who say that by suggesting Christianity should have something to do with faculty hiring, I have "offended"

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non-Christian professors and, therefore, have acted uncharitably. My intent was to get the attention of Christians, not to criticize non-Christians. But if we first hire non-Christians and then must refrain from discussing the role Christianity should play in future hiring decisions for fear of offending them, it will be only a matter of time until non-Christians reach a critical mass and decide that religious belief should no longer be a criterion in hiring decisions.

The information Prof. Turner has received concerning "affirmative action" at Notre Dame is simply inaccurate. Although the University has indeed placed several distinguished Christian scholars in endowed chairs, each academic department has a high degree of autonomy in making most hiring decisions. And although their decisions are approved by higher-level administrators after they have been made, approval is unrelated to candidates' religious beliefs. In a 1983 document entitled "Priorities and Commitments for Excellence," Notre Dame Provost Timothy O'Meara reported that 55 percent of the untenured regular faculty were Catholic. He added: "The evidence suggests that if Notre Dame is not more successful in attracting Catholics, it will cease to be a Catholic university in a generation or two." But the figure of 55 percent was determined by a simple binary distinction between those who were at least nominally Catholic and those who were not. Because many of Notre Dame's nominally Catholic professors either were never believers or are apostates, the threat to the Christian identity of the University in 1992 is imminent.

Prof. Turner cites the size of Notre Dame's theology and philosophy departments as evidence that I am mistaken. But there is no positive correlation between the degree of Christianity of an academic department and its size. Certainly a department can be large without being Christian. Therefore, the size of certain departments is no evidence that my thesis concerning the secularization of the University is false.

Prof. Turner is certainly correct in maintaining that there are more genuinely Christian scholars at Notre Dame than at most other American universities. But the presence of many committed Christians at Notre Dame is consistent with my argument. It is because Notre Dame is in better condition than the great majority of what were founded as Christian universities that I am writing about Notre Dame and not some other school.

Some of my Christian critics on the Notre Dame campus agree with Prof. Turner that I have written about a problem that does not exist. But others say that the battle to have a Christian university was fought and lost years ago and that I have only made it more difficult for them to get along with their non-Christian colleagues. I wish these two groups of Christian critics would debate one another; but so far they have not.

A Better Lutheran Difference

Mark A. Noll's "The Lutheran Difference" (February) was superb; thank you for publishing it.

His reading of recent American Lutheran history seems to me to be quite accurate. It is startling to realize that our tortured last twenty years (the "deformation" of American Lutheranism in a new Missouri and ELCA) may be little more than accommodation to our American home—a mere one hundred years late. I hardly know whether to laugh or cry. Noll, and I'm sure Luther, will understand that I am doing both.

God is calling us Lutherans to be more than affirmative action advocates with a (disguised) Lutheran accent and more than Evangelicals with (some) vestments. Noll makes a good case for a better "Lutheran difference."

John R. Hannah
Lutheran Chaplain
Fort Monmouth, NJ

To be able to "see oursel's as ithers see us" is a rare and always valuable experience. As a lifelong Lutheran, I was immediately drawn to Mark A. Noll's article. . . . Professor Noll is looking at us from the outside, but he does see us clearly. His advice that we remain true to our heritage and confessions, demonstrating to the world that they are important to us, cannot be faulted.

He seems, however, to write from the point of view that looks first to government for the solution of the problems of life, and to imply that Lutherans are not doing their share for the common good because they are underrepresented in the upper echelons of politics. But if we (properly) regard government as a necessary evil, then the "political quietism" he ascribes to Lutherans is not a weakness. . . .

John E. Schaefer
Oak Harbor, WA

Rethinking Feminism

Although I frequently find myself at odds with FIRST THINGS over issues pertaining to economics and the role of government in public life, I usually find its critique of American social mores and ethics to be insightful and illuminating. A case in point is Orania Papazoglou's scathing indictment of modern American feminism, "Despising Our Mothers, Despising Ourselves" (January). Her article goes a long way toward explaining the feminization of poverty and the war on children, phenomena that in my view could eventually destroy the social fabric of our nation and undermine any hope of a bright future for my two young sons. It also makes clear why women like my wife, who has an M.Arch. from the University of Virginia and has done graduate work in theology at Tuebingen, feel such deep distress and ambivalence, even shame, over their decision to stay at home for the sake of their children.

I do not share, however, Ms. Papazoglou's pessimism about the prospect for a new feminism that both asserts the rights of women in the workplace and upholds the family and marriage as the bedrock of civilization. Almost all of my wife's friends—and their husbands—have had their perspectives radically altered by the experience of having

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children. The reality of a hormonally driven maternal instinct, distinction in the behavior of girls and boys at a very young age in spite of gender-neutral social engineering, and the revelation that you can't "have it all" have come as a deep shock to all of us. (The most startling discovery is that father cannot replace mother as the primary caregiver, even within days of birth, without eliciting feelings of rage and abandonment in children, no matter what the quality of the father's care.) This transformation has great implications for the future of feminism and will, I am convinced, eventually restore us to sanity. Articles like Ms. Papazoglou's are only the beginning.

(The Rev.) Jonathan Currier
St. Peter's Church
Albany, NY

Fighting Euthanasia

Two recent First Things pieces—"Euthanasia: Final Exit, Final Excuse" (December 1991), and "Always to Care, Never to Kill: A Declaration on Euthanasia" (February 1992)—deserve wide dissemination. But as powerfully persuasive as they are, the slide to active euthanasia, I am afraid, will continue. The reasons include the Patient's Self-Determination Act of Senators John Danforth and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. This act has now become the law of the land and requires that patients on admission to a hospital or other institutions in receipt of federal health care funds be questioned about Advance Directives—which are a Living Will, Health Care Agent, Durable Power of Attorney—so that if unable to express an opinion, the patient's wishes concerning life-sustaining technologies will have been made known. The act is well-intended, and in the case of intensive care units apprehension is understandable. Between the technological imperative, a need-to-know ethic, medical subspecialists so smugly focused, a legal system that has cancelled the concept of trust, and a reimbursement system that has become an end in itself, there is enough blame to go around for our present confusions. It is not surprising that the possibility of a fate worse than death has been emphasized and that death becomes not only a choice but a right.

As a physician, I bitterly resent what is happening to my profession, but the slide to euthanasia will not be stopped by less than a concerted effort—and your articles are major contributions.

Paul D. Doolan, M.D.
Clinical Professor of Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine

Dread Possibilities

The announcement of your . . . publication terrifies me. You will publish the works of right-wing religious radicals, pseudo-intellectuals, bright but aged and arrogant narrow minds, and hierarchical loose cannons; you will support not the quest for theological understanding, but the "party line" emanating from Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger; you will not be open to the gift of the Spirit in the People of God; you will confuse the exercise of raw power as the will of God; you will, in sum, be attempting to reverse the immensely important theological progress of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul I.

What a waste! Even more, what a tragedy!

(The Rev.) Thomas F. McQueeny
St. Louis, MO

The Editors reply:

And all that on the basis of a mere announcement. We tremble at contemplating the wrath of Father McQueeny had he actually read the journal.

Gender Incorrectness

Thank you for your announcement of the periodical First Things.

I noticed that your Editorial Board has only one woman, and the Religion and Public Life Institute has twice as many men as women. Your [advertising] flyer has seven times as many men.

Please write when you equalize these numbers. We will then review your publication.

Margaret Mary Majewski, O.P., Ed.D.
Saint Mary's University Parish
Mount Pleasant, MI

The Editors reply:

The sister is wrong about there being only one woman on the Editorial Board. Second and more important, she misses an even more egregious imbalance: on the Editorial Board and the Institute Council we do not have even one person who is so muddleheaded as to judge a journal by gender rather than by its quality of thought and writing. We have no intention of remedying that happy imbalance.

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FIRST THINGS
MAY 1992

The Year that Conservatism Turned Ugly

To judge simply by the responses we have received, a good many readers did not like the editorial in the March issue, "Christians, Jews, and Anti-Semitism." Some responses, we are sorry to say, gave all the appearances of reflecting the evil that the editors were intending to counter. On the other hand, more readers applauded the editorial. We have done no readership survey on responses to the editorial, nor do we need one in order to know that the question of anti-Semitism continues to be surrounded by confusions and passions of baffling variety.

The editorial was partly occasioned, readers will recall, by William F. Buckley's much-remarked December essay in *National Review*, "In Search of Anti-Semitism." In that essay, Buckley concluded that James Freedman of Dartmouth College had abused the charge of anti-Semitism in order to impose political correctness, that Gore Vidal is an anti-Semite, and that Joseph Sobran and Patrick Buchanan had made anti-Semitic statements, even though they are not anti-Semites. Not surprisingly in view of his part in the presidential campaign, most of the subsequent discussion has focused on the case of Pat Buchanan.

Some of the reactions would be amusing were they not so ugly. The Illinois-based *Chronicles*, the flagscow publication of something called the John Randolph Society, an unabashedly reactionary collection of "paleoconservatives," lashes out with a vicious personal attack on Buckley. According to *Chronicles*, Buchanan, Sobran, and friends are self-evidently not anti-Semitic, and "only the malevolent or the manipulated would bring in a verdict of guilty." Speculating on who might be malevolent and manipulated, the article refers to a "backgrounder" published by the American Jewish Committee in 1990. It seems that the AJC backgrounder worried about Buchanan's views on Jews and Israel, and expressed the hope that some non-Jewish conservative would pin him on the question of anti-Semitism. Comments *Chronicles*, "If Rasputin and Machiavelli had conspired over cocktails, they could not have concocted a more furtive stratagem." Obviously—or at least it is obvious in the fevered world of *Chronicles*—the AJC gave Buckley the contract to hit Buchanan. Which is another way of saying: "We and our friends are not anti-Semitic, and anybody who says otherwise is a tool of the Jewish conspiracy."

Things got muddled also, however, in the usually thoughtful world of *National Review*. After its founder and president determined that Buchanan had repeatedly made anti-Semitic statements, that journal went ahead and endorsed Buchanan in the primaries as a "protest" against President Bush's meanderings from conservative policies. Eleven distinguished figures, plus two editors of this journal, signed a letter protesting any endorsement, even a "tactical endorsement," of a candidate who refused to retract his anti-Semitic remarks. In response, *NR* editor John O'Sullivan wrote that anti-Semitism is indeed a singularly odious offense and "we cannot treat it as a minor character flaw or mistaken policy preference, to be tacitly accepted in a candidate or organization otherwise sensible." Good. He went on to say that "we would not have endorsed Mr. Buchanan if we had believed him to be anti-Semitic."

The question is not whether Pat Buchanan is anti-Semitic but whether he has made anti-Semitic statements for which he refuses to apologize. Mr. O'Sullivan says it is wrong to view "the sum of his writings as anti-Semitic." Mr. Buchanan has written millions of words and it would be hard to know what "the sum of his writings" might be on many issues. Mr. Buckley and the thirteen signers of the letter did not pass judgment on the sum of his writings but on a specific number of statements

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that were unmistakably anti-Semitic in character. In the same issue O'Sullivan writes that people must "seek to entice Mr. Buchanan into overcoming his pride and offering an apology for the remarks that, whether unfairly or not, have caused him to be labeled anti-Semitic." But if the remarks (not Mr. Buchanan) were unfairly labeled anti-Semitic, it is hard to know why Mr. Buchanan should apologize.

Now, in fact, Mr. Buchanan has repeatedly and publicly insisted that he is not anti-Semitic. In an interview with Pat Robertson's *Christian America*, he says: "Pat Buchanan is a believing and true Christian. And no true Christian can carry within his heart hatred for any of God's children. . . . With regard to the Jewish people, I am as aware as any other Christian that our Savior was Jewish. His mother was Jewish. The apostles were Jewish. The first martyrs were Jewish. . . . So no true Christian, in my judgment, can be an anti-Semite." Moreover, talking to the conservative weekly *Human Events*, Buchanan said, "My view with regard to the Israelis is that the United States has a sort of moral commitment, if not an alliance, to guarantee the security and survival of the Israeli state. That would be maintained in a Buchanan Administration."

If we credit the sincerity of these statements, and we do, it makes it all the more puzzling that Mr. Buchanan makes assertions that so many reasonable people—including people who are otherwise sympathetic to him and his views—are forced to describe as anti-Semitic. And it makes it more puzzling still why, months later, he persists in refusing to retract the statements in question, or, at the very least, to apologize for making statements that lent themselves to such hurtful misunderstanding. For even the most charitable, that stubborn refusal has to raise a question about Mr. Buchanan's character. Like Mr. Buckley, and apparently unlike Mr. O'Sullivan, we believe that the statements in question were fairly judged to be anti-Semitic. Surely it is up to Mr. Buchanan to explain how someone who is not an anti-Semite could make such statements, and why he did not mean what so many thought he meant.

A substantial part of the March 16 issue of *NR* is given to responses to Mr. Buckley's original essay. It seems a good many *NR* readers think that anti-Semitism is simply a nonissue, and they resent Buckley's argument to the contrary. The gist of Joseph Sobran's extended essay in that issue of *NR* is that anti-Semitism is no more than an epithet intended to intimidate those who are critical of U.S. policy toward Israel. He writes, "An 'anti-Semite,' in actual usage, is less often a man who hates Jews than a man certain Jews hate. . . . The term 'anti-Semitism' doesn't stand for any intelligible concept." Hugh Kenner agrees. Anti-Semitism, he writes, "has no stable meaning; it can run all the way from gas ovens to a mere wish that [Abe Rosenthal of the *New York Times*] would moderate his frenzies. And a term that has no stable meaning is simply not a profitable head for rational discussion."

It is an intriguing observation. One might ask whether words such as "anti-Semitism," "sexism," "homophobia," and "racism" have been so debased as terms of political correctness that they should be consigned to the linguistic dustbin. In the case of "sexism" and "homophobia," we are inclined to answer in the affirmative. There are misogynists who hate or devalue women, and there no doubt are people who fear homosexuals or their own homosexual impulses. But we do not need the terms "sexism" and "homophobia" to describe the phenomena in question. "Sexism" and "homophobia" are terms of recent ideological invention and are designed as weapons to discredit opponents in the culture wars in which our society is embroiled. One rejects these terms not, *pace* Hugh Kenner, because they have no "stable meaning" but because their meaning and ideological intent are altogether too clear. (If one were to reject terms because they have no stable meaning, one might begin in our deranged times with Professor Kenner's "rational discussion.")

The situation is different with "racism" and "anti-Semitism." Granted, both terms have been much abused and thereby debased. (In our judgment, the former more than the latter.) But here an old theological axiom applies, *abusus non tollit usum*, the abuse does not abolish the use. Racism may be defined as the view that different races are inherently superior or inferior, and that the superior race(s) should dominate the inferior. Racism undergirded slavery in our history and, despite the term's being so loosely tossed about, it is by no means absent from American life today. As for anti-Semitism, we tried a definition of it in the above-mentioned editorial and will not try again here. There is a historical record and a vast literature illuminating anti-Semitism and its consequences. Those who claim that the term is no more than a polemical artifice are either culpably ignorant or are prepared, for whatever reason, to trivialize one of the most deadly diseases of the modern era.

The end result of the renewed attention to anti-Semitism may be, contrary to many good intentions, to trivialize the question of anti-Semitism. It simply becomes one more interesting issue that serves as grist for the conversational mills of the chattering classes. As has unhappily happened with the term "racism," the mention of "anti-Semitism" loses its power to evoke caution and reflection among decent people. That most calm and lucid of neoconservatives, Irving Kristol, writes in *NR* that he has in the past been inclined to

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discount alarums about anti-Semitism in American life. Now he is not so sure. If Pat Buchanan can get away with repeatedly making anti-Semitic statements, something may be changing. "Pat Buchanan is ostensibly running for President," writes Kristol, "but in truth his ambition is to assume leadership and to reshape the American conservative movement. Should he succeed, this movement will have suffered its greatest defeat since the election of 1964, which set the liberal tone for American politics for the next 15 years. . . . By importing into American conservatism a set of anti-Semitic innuendos, [the Buchananites] are debasing the conservative movement and robbing it, in the eyes of the public, of its political legitimacy."

The John Randolph Society, of which Buchanan is a member, takes a very different view of the matter. What others see as anti-Semitism, says the society's president Murray Rothbard, does not need to be "imported" into conservatism. It is part of the authentic conservatism of the "Old Right" that the Randolphites are determined to restore. In a presidential address to the society, Rothbard rails against "Pope Buckley" and his efforts to "excommunicate" undesirables from the conservative movement. Over the decades, Buckley and *NR* succeeded in reading out of the conservative movement such as the Ayn Rand fetishists, the John Birchers, the white supremacists, and the anti-Semites. He made conservativism "respectable" in American political culture, and respectability is precisely what the Randolphites despise.

A sample of Rothbard's rantings: "Pat Buchanan's race for the Presidency has changed the face of the right wing. . . . He has created a new radical, or Hard Right, very much like the original Right before *National Review*. . . . [We] frankly don't give a fig for Buckley's papal pronunciamento. The original Right, and all its heresies is back! . . . That movement, neither kind nor gentle, now sets the agenda, and sets the terms of the debate."

Rothbard's victory claims are undoubtedly premature. But the stated ambitions of the Randolphites are not implausible. At least for the moment, they are on a high, and not without reason. But contemporary conservatism is composed of many parts. There is Buckley and the solid tradition of *National Review*, there are the neoconservatives, the "New Right" of evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics, and, yes, the much pilloried "country club" conservatives of the old Republican establishment. All of these groupings, which undoubtedly make up the great majority of Americans who call themselves conservative, view the Randolphite insurgency as appalling—because it is morally odious, because it is politically suicidal, or simply because it is tacky beyond endurance.

Will the Randolphites be an important factor in the years ahead? It seems very likely. Will they be the dominant force in defining American conservatism? We think not, and very much hope not. We hope not for many reasons, and not least because the "heresies" that Mr. Rothbard so relishes are in fact heresies. Racism, nativism, paranoid conspiratorialism, and anti-Semitism are heresies both moral and political. They have no place in civilized public discourse, and those who invite them back into the public square invite the conclusion of others that *they* have no place there either. And yet it may be that Rothbard is right, that his movement will for a time set the agenda and the terms of the debate. Certainly they have captured attention. The barbarians at the gates and within the gates inevitably come to the urgent notice of those who care about defending the *civitas*.

The resistance to anti-Semitism may already be one casualty of the assault. In the aftermath of the Third Reich, there was a strong taboo against even the slightest suggestion of anti-Semitism. On the left of our political culture, that taboo has long since been severely weakened or even eliminated. As with so many other social pathologies, it began in the 1960s. That's when black power agitators felt free to blame "Jew boys" and "Shylocks" for their putative oppression, and most of their liberal sympathizers, including Jewish sympathizers, declared that they were in no position to censure the expression of "authentic black anger." The taboo against anti-Semitism was further weakened by "third worldists" who discovered that the Palestinian cause served as an admirable weapon with which to bludgeon Israel as a tool of American "imperialism." Regrettably, they were sometimes aided by opponents who recklessly equated reasonable criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.

The result has been that, for the last twenty years, anti-Semitism has been a nonissue on the left. The Gore Vidals could vent their anti-Semitic bile and hardly raise an eyebrow. (The above-mentioned *Chronicles* has celebrated Gore Vidal as a model for conservatives.) In our political culture, the left can get away with tolerating many things for which the right would be mercilessly excoriated. It may not be fair, but so it is. It is also worth remembering that in this century, up until Buckley's cleaning of the stables, anti-Semitism was understood to be a sin characteristic of the right. The appearance of anti-Semitism on the right, unlike its appearance on the left, plays to a negative stereotype that is deeply entrenched, and understandably so.

In recent decades, the line against anti-Semitism has been held by the conservative movement—by neoconservatives, by the Christian New Right, and by *National Review* under the leadership of William F. Buckley, Jr. That line of defense is now weakened by the attack of the Randolphites—an attack inadvertently aided by the inept response of *Na-*

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tional Review to their candidate, Pat Buchanan. If that line of defense against anti-Semitism and related heresies is broken, 1992 may be remembered, long after the excitements of this presidential campaign are past, as the year that American conservatism turned ugly, committing moral and political suicide. As aforesaid, the victory claims of the Randolphites are premature. For the sake of a common good that is above parties and movements, all of us have reason to hope that those claims are falsified, and soon.

The Corruption of the Would-Be First Estate

The fourth estate now considers itself to be the first estate, and not without reason. In public affairs at least, the press has aspired to replace not only what used to be the first estate, the clergy, but also the nobility and the commons, the last presumably representing the people. In the American polity, there are not three estates but three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial. Today all three are under the whip of a fourth branch, the press. It is not surprising that young people entering journalism today are not embarrassed to say that they are motivated by a desire for power. The power of the journalists is by no means undisputed. But the "checks and balances" system is not what our civic texts claimed. Such checks and balances are not in the formal polity itself. Rather, the formal polity—legislative, executive, and judicial—is a modest check upon the ambitions of the media. Other checks are exercised by the "independent sector"—churches, voluntary associations, labor unions, foundations, and, to some extent, universities. The most effective check lies in the habits and informed prejudices of ordinary people who, much to the indignation of the media, frequently persist in thinking for themselves.

The power of the press is in its ability to destroy and distort. Its positive power to influence is inseparable from and largely derived from the threat—always implicit, sometimes overt—to destroy and distort. Commentators on the role of the media in our society swing wildly between depicting it as nearly omnipotent and nearly impotent. It is neither. One is struck, however, by the remarkable resistance of the American people to instruction by their betters in the journalistic guild. If the prestige press had had its way, five of the last six presidential elections would have gone the other way, the Equal Rights Amendment would be the law of the land, *Roe v. Wade* would have remained unchallenged, and the West would have made its peace with Soviet Communism as a permanent feature of world politics. So there is comfort in the evidence that the ambitions of the media to establish a mediacracy do not go unchecked.

Reflection on the imperial press in our public life is prompted by the case of Senator Brock Adams. Readers will recall that the *Seattle Times* brought Adams down by publishing charges by anonymous sources that he had molested a number of women and raped at least one. Adams flatly denied the charges but, in view of the damage done, withdrew from his race for reelection and at this point it is uncertain whether he will serve out his term. The man is destroyed, and not only politically.

We have never met Adams and have no idea what he did or did not do. We do know that he was destroyed by what was presented to the public as second-hand information allegedly gained from eight women, seven of whom reportedly signed an agreement that they would testify in public if Adams had the temerity to sue the *Seattle Times* for libel. Consider what happened. Editors, or perhaps an editor, decided that the paper had the "truth" and the public had, wouldn't you know it, "the right to know." On the word of the *Seattle Times*—without evidence, without witnesses, without a hearing—Brock Adams has been driven from public life, his reputation demolished, he and his life work made infamous. A person is presumed innocent until proved guilty, unless the would-be first estate declares him guilty.

Of course Adams can sue the paper. If that is the ordeal through which he is prepared to put his wife, his children, his friends, and himself. If that is how he wants to spend his next few years and probably all the money that he has and would be able to raise. The first estate is big business and the *Seattle Times* no doubt has all the lawyers it needs. In addition, the publicity surrounding such a suit would sell a lot of papers. If the editors are to be believed, they have several Anita Hills prepared to testify. If the charges were found to be unsubstantiated or false, the paper might be fined a portion of the profits that it made from the case.

In a possible subsequent criminal trial on the charges themselves, Adams might end up being acquitted, as Clarence Thomas ended up being nominated, but with what would Adams be left? The *Seattle Times* and others in the media guild would almost certainly declare him guilty and blame the miscarriage of justice on a "sexist" system that refuses to credit the testimony of the Anita Hills of the world. And of course the whole protracted thing would be

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a sensational story for the paper. Whether he won or lost his libel suit and criminal trial(s), Brock Adams is publicly ruined. Heads the would-be first estate wins, tails its victims lose.

In 1988 a woman accused Adams of sexual abuse but the District of Columbia prosecutors found upon investigation that there was no evidence to support the charge. The *Seattle Times* admits, indeed it boasts, that it dug hard to get dirt on Adams. Some of the incidents to which the eight women are allegedly prepared to testify, if it comes to a libel suit, go back ten and twenty years. It is explained that the women do not want to go public with their charges because it would be inconvenient to their careers, and making such charges publicly is so very "painful to the victims." Since he is an alleged victimizer, it is not pertinent that Adams may be a victim. This is character assassination on the cheap. At least Anita Hill, albeit under duress, came forward with her charges, risking popular opprobrium and inviting feminist celebritydom, both of which she received.

The feminist organizations evidenced a touch of ambivalence in the Adams case. He has been such a political stalwart of their causes, and is a notably obedient proponent of "abortion rights." But after the initial hesitation they came down on the side of demanding that he resign rather than finish his term. That, according to the news media, is also the sentiment of the people of Washington State. He should either sue the *Times*, with all the consequences alluded to above, or resign. We are told that the people subscribe to the maxim that where there's smoke there's fire. Another maxim seems at least equally relevant: Sling enough mud and some of it will stick.

To their credit, a few members of the journalistic *imperium* protested the *Seattle Times*' raw use of the power of the press to impose such grave punishment without due process of the law. Even the *New York Times* had qualms enough to prompt some portentous editorial fretting. "The timing of publication, in an election year, naturally feeds suspicion of a plot by the newspaper or unidentified saboteurs to kill [Adams] off. The paper insists that's not so." Comaraderie within the first estate apparently requires that the one *Times* accept the word of the other *Times*. The Seattle paper said it is not so, so it is not so. The "more likely explanation" for why the Seattle paper did what it did, says the New York paper, is that "the withering spotlight" on women in sexual harassment cases makes them reluctant to give testimony. So, in the absence of testimony, evidence, hearings, and similar niceties, the *Seattle Times* really had no choice but to go ahead and destroy Brock Adams on its own. It was a veritable public duty, reluctantly exercised by those who bear the burden of rule, namely, the press.

The *New York Times* concludes its moral examination thus: "What is a newspaper to do with such damaging information as that on Brock Adams? Verify, verify, verify. Then publish what it believes to be the truth, however painful. The *Seattle Times* appears to have followed this high standard." The reference to a "high standard" raises to new heights the definition of smarminess. To whose satisfaction is a paper to verify, verify, verify? To its own of course, the first estate being a law unto itself. In the Brock Adams case, the *Seattle Times* was prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. Not one piece of evidence is produced. There is only the claim of the Seattle editors that they have such evidence, and their threat to make it public if their victim is so foolish as to challenge them in court.

The behavior of the *Seattle Times* is morally contemptible. That, with few exceptions, it met with silence or approval from others in the would-be first estate is cause for deep concern about the state of democratic governance. The news media, encouraged by the once-respected and still-influential *New York Times*, is turning "journalistic ethics" into a grotesque oxymoron. For all their moralistic pretensions to being the guardians of the public interest, the print and broadcast media today are very big business, and their business is entertainment. Few things are more entertaining to vulgar and vicious tastes than watching the mighty brought low, and the respected disgraced. The *Seattle Times* episode advances the moral corrosion of a press that increasingly panders to such tastes, bypassing elementary issues of truth, decency, and fairness, while congratulating itself upon doing its duty, "however painful." It is self-serving and contemptible. It is the "high standard" of contemporary journalism.

Opinion

The Rapist and the Virgin

Gilbert Meilaender

It may just have been a throwaway line, a presumed witticism, to which he gave little thought; in which case he is convicted merely of intellectual sloppiness. But it may also have been seriously meant, a revelation of his considered judgment; in

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which case he offers us a window into the blindness of our contemporary culture.

Writing at a time when many people were paying attention to the travails of "the Clinton couple of Arkansas," A. M. Rosenthal, on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* that he once edited, thanked the Clintons for the "gift" of presuming "that Americans have achieved adulthood at last" and delivered himself of this opinion: "I know there are voters who do believe that a President should have what they consider a spotless sexual history. Personally the only candidate for public office I would automatically disqualify on sexual grounds would be a rapist or a virgin."

This is not, I have a hunch, the man from whom I want to take my standard for adulthood. The issue Rosenthal was addressing in his column raises many interesting and serious questions. Should we make a sharp distinction between public and private life as in the judgment (attributed to Martin Luther) that it is better to be ruled by a wise Turk than a foolish Christian? Or should we suppose that the moral character of people, even as displayed in relationships we think of as private, is not irrelevant to their desirability for public office? In forming our judgment about those who seek office, shall we pay more heed to the things a man says about the rights of women, or to the way he treats his wife? If we have gotten beyond paying attention to the way character is displayed in sexual conduct, is that a sign of "adulthood"? Or pseudo-sophisticated condescension?

Interesting questions, all of them. Here, though, I pass them by in order to ponder the—to my mind—astonishing claim that the rapist and the virgin are equally unfit for public office. On the assumption that Mr. Rosenthal regards rape as abhorrent, virginity must be a rather serious form of sexual offense. What can he have meant?

The most generous interpretation I can think of goes something like this: Virginity would disqualify one for office, not precisely because it is a moral failing, but because it bespeaks a lack of experience, a naiveté we can ill afford in our public servants. This presumes, however, that one might—virginity intact—reach an age suited for public office without having in any way committed oneself to such a sexual life. Surely a doubtful presumption. In our culture one who has refrained from genital intercourse is likely to be a thoughtful, committed, disciplined person. Not always, perhaps, but often. He or she is likely to have reasons to give in support of that decision, likely to have given the matter some thought. Quite the opposite of naive.

Still, though, such a person might be suspected of being almost asexual, lacking a central human passion or power. (We'd better watch our slurs, however. Perhaps in the current climate such people are best described as "libidinously challenged.") Such a view, however, fails to appreciate the nature of humankind as male and female—indeed, in the language of Jews and Christians, the *creation* of humankind as a sexually differentiated species in which we come to know ourselves only through encountering the sexually other. In all of life's meetings, and not only in coitus, we are sexual beings and we must learn to relate to each other as male and female. To narrow this encounter to coitus is to miss a great deal indeed. Men and women might treat each other with more respect than they often do in our society if we did not suppose that we are sexual beings only in bed.

These are the most generous interpretations I can offer, and they are not likely to persuade us of Rosenthal's thoughtfulness. But perhaps he really did mean something quite different, did mean to identify rape and virginity as equally grave moral failings. If such a view can pass as intellectually and morally serious, we are in deep trouble indeed. For it sets aside the Jewish and Christian ideal of marriage and the meaning of chastity connected with it. It sets aside the Christian understanding of celibacy and virginity—of bypassing the encounter that takes place in sexual intercourse in order to give the self unreservedly to a lifelong encounter with God. It sets aside Plato's understanding of philosophy, for which shared love of wisdom is the product of disciplined and redirected eros.

And it sets aside the lessons of common experience—that the sexual impulse is often anarchic, that in the grip of its anarchic power we may do great harm to others, and that also in this sphere of life restraint and discipline are needed if we are truly to flourish as individuals and as a community. Whatever their practice, the teenagers to whom we distribute condoms know better the dangers of such anarchy—and deserve better from those who offer their wisdom for public consumption.

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Suya Wars

Alan Jacobs

Most Americans believe, when they think of the issue at all, that our disputes over the role of religion in public life and discourse are pretty heated—though for some of us they aren't nearly hot *enough*. But in other places the complexity of the issues and the intensity of conflicts exceed

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anything Americans can imagine. Particularly in non-Western countries, where easy divisions between the sacred and the secular are unheard-of, religious turmoil can arise in strange ways. For instance, according to everyone I talked to in Nigeria last summer, the riots that have killed hundreds of people in the northern city of Bauchi over the past year arose from a dispute over fast food.

On the streets of every Nigerian city you can find vendors of *suya*—peppery slices of beef impaled on a bamboo skewer and cooked over an open fire—but it is especially popular in the Muslim-dominated north of the country. In the evenings the *suya* stands produce a tempting aroma, and men (rarely women) gather in the light of the fire to eat and talk well into the night. A year ago April in Bauchi, a Muslim aficionado of *suya* was told that his local purveyor, a Christian, was serving pork rather than beef—a clear violation of Muslim dietary prohibitions. The angry Muslim confronted the merchant, who denied the charge; but as more and more people became involved in the argument, the Muslims of Bauchi came to suspect, not an indiscreet merchant's attempts at corner-cutting, but rather a deliberate affront to their faith—the sort of affront that would not happen if Nigeria were governed by Islamic law.

What happened next is a matter of dispute. The country's military government insists that the violence was quickly brought under control, and that not more than 130 people were killed. Rumor and some Nigerian newspapers (sources often difficult to distinguish) claim that as many as a thousand people have been killed, and that the violence, though reduced, has not been stopped. Nigerian Christians say that the overwhelming majority of those killed were Christians; significantly, Muslims don't seem to be contradicting the story. And a recent American visitor to Bauchi told me that he saw several churches that had been burned to the ground, but observed no damage to the city's mosques.

As Nigeria begins its transition from a military to a civilian government—the process working its way up from local levels, where civilians are already in charge, to the national level, where elections are scheduled for next year—it faces the possibility of a crisis like the one that almost destroyed the country twenty-four years ago. But whereas the engines that drove the Biafran war were largely tribal (Biafra was in essence the creation of the Ibo people, the dominant tribe in eastern Nigeria), the current tensions are religious and thus cut across tribal lines.

Such conflicts provoke renewed inquiry into the Koran's puzzling and apparently contradictory attitudes toward Christians and Jews, the "People of the Book": Muslims are told in the same *surah* ("The Table"), virtually in the same breath, that Christians and Jews will attain salvation by following their own religion, but that if they deviate from true Koranic doctrine they are subject to earthly punishment and eternal damnation. And in the political sphere, such conflicts provide a fascinating glimpse into the problems of accommodating an increasingly large and confident Islamic community to the religiously pluralistic character of a secular state.

If you talk to Nigerian Christians, especially those who live north of the Niger River, you will find that what they think of as "the Islamic threat" is rarely far from their minds. When I would speak of my newfound cravings for *suya*, they would smile sadly, remembering Bauchi. (One man told me that he could no longer eat *suya*.) I found it difficult to understand their extravagant praise of the United States' role in defeating Iraq—until I realized that they understood the conflict as between Christians and Muslims, with the Christians emerging victorious (a hopeful portent for their own situation). I had been told before coming to Nigeria that some of the traditional African enthusiasm for large families, especially among the educated, was abating; but the Christians I spoke to were anxious to have as many children as possible, in hopes that those children would be able to vote for Christians in future elections. They are very concerned that Muslims are out-reproducing them: some recent estimates fix the Nigerian population at 49 percent Muslim and 41 percent Christian (with the remainder practicing African traditional religions), so the Christians may have some catching up to do.

Moreover, Muslim influence in Nigerian public life is far disproportionate to the numbers: almost every major figure in the current military government, including the president and all but one cabinet member, is Muslim. It was this ruling cadre that arranged, in 1986, for Nigeria to join the Islamic Conference—a decision that sparked something approaching panic among Nigeria's Christians, whose traditional inclination to scorn the political order they have now, however belatedly, begun to regret. The coup that threatened to topple General Ibrahim Babangida's government in April of 1990 was by all accounts generated by Christians in the army—most of whom are still in place.

Some believe that Christian fears should be lessened by the fact that the decision to join the Islamic Conference was motivated by economic rather than religious concerns. Nigeria's economy, despite its substantial oil production (it is the fourth-leading supplier of oil to the U.S.), declined precipitously in the 1980s: at the beginning of that decade a naira was worth more than a dollar, while today's going rate values the naira at less than a

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dime. Given this devaluation, the government has sought hard currency outside Nigeria, and has found a willing sugar daddy in Saudi Arabia. Saudi money may keep the country from becoming one of the world's chronic debtors, but in exchange the Saudis encourage Nigerian leaders to favor the causes of the country's Islamic population, and they take all available opportunities to build mosques. Every Nigerian city that I saw has its meager skyline overwhelmed by enormous mosques constructed by the Saudis.

Thus the economic and the religious issues are not clearly distinguishable in Nigeria; and that's why the country's Christians—though there has been no indication whatsoever that their right to worship might be curtailed—are worried about their future. It is not so much the possible recurrence of the Bauchi riots that they fear; a more pressing long-term concern is what underlay the riots, the changing attitude of Nigeria's Muslims toward the relations between civil law and the *sharia*, the Islamic legal code.

In the late 1950s, as Nigeria was preparing for independence, questions arose about what kind of legal system could be instituted that would be acceptable to the new country's Muslims. (The British colonial government hadn't asked them, or any other Nigerians, what kind of law they wanted.) The problem proved nearly intractable, since in the Muslim view *sharia* is divinely instituted and not open to compromise. Eventually, after protracted wrangling—involving such issues as whether civil law should extend the Muslim ban on drinking alcohol to all Nigerians—the parties agreed to adopt a legal code that, while secular in its language and universal in its application, would not contradict the provisions of *sharia*.

In recent years, however, this vague and probably incoherent compromise—*is* the decision to allow non-Muslims to buy and drink alcohol consistent with *sharia*?—has come under greater and greater attack from the Muslim community. In 1989, for example, a convention of Muslim university students produced a manifesto demanding the full implementation of *sharia* in Nigerian law and rejecting as unacceptable to the Muslim conscience any compromise made in the name of merely national unity.

Perhaps more disturbing, not only to Christians but to all supporters of secular government in Nigeria, is the testimony I heard from a prominent solicitor in the city of Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state in west-central Nigeria. This man—a former official of the Second Republic (the previous civilian government, overthrown by the military in 1983) who was once imprisoned by the current regime—told me that in many places in the north, where he often tries cases, Nigerian civil law has become a dead letter: judges regularly turn cases over to the *sharia* courts even if only one party to the case is a Muslim. The problems resulting from such decisions are particularly acute, the solicitor told me, when the cases involved are marital disputes or divorce petitions involving a Muslim husband and a non-Muslim wife. In such cases, he claimed, the woman has no chance at all for a fair hearing.

Despite such practices, and the widespread controversy I have described, this solicitor is still hopeful. "The military government has made a mess of things," he says. "Civilians are better at handling such problems. They have a more subtle touch. They know how to avert conflicts, instead of simply cracking down violently after trouble occurs. And the Muslim leaders, even in the north, want to make the compromises necessary to hold this nation together."

But not everyone is so confident. I spoke to one young man, a graduate student in chemistry at a northern university and a leader of a Christian student organization (in an area where Christians are not numerous). During the Bauchi riots, he told me, Muslim students at his university attacked Christian students, seriously injuring several, and burned a couple of houses. But this young man used his knowledge of chemistry to teach his friends how to build kerosene bombs, and it didn't take many of those, he said, to convince the Muslims to leave the Christians alone. "*That's* liberation theology," he said, with some heat. "And it works."

All these things I discovered while teaching at a seminary located in Igbaja, a small town some forty miles from Ilorin. After listening, at a gathering in a friend's house, to the young chemist's passionate declaration, I headed home across the dark compound, shining a flashlight's beam ahead of me in case snakes were about. Then I heard the two strange sounds I still associate with evenings in Igbaja: first, fruit bats pinging in the dense mango trees overhead, and then, from the big mosque in the center of town, the distorted hiss and crackle of the recorded *muezzin*, calling the Muslim faithful to evening prayer and—I couldn't help thinking—if necessary, to holy war.

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What the Bishops Don't Know About Families

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Blankenhorn

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' most recent contribution to our national debate on the family, a statement entitled *Putting Children First*, approved last November, calls our attention to the worldwide trend of declining child well-being. With each passing year, in the United States and around the world, it is getting harder to be a child. To such a stunningly consequential fact, the bishops tell us, moral and political attention must be paid.

There is much good sense in the attention that *Putting Children First* pays. To begin with, the bishops, unlike some children's advocates, recognize that children are not a stand-alone constituency. The bishops understand that the most important "children's program" is a stable, loving family; that the parent is the child's first and most important teacher; and that the role of the church, the school, and the state should be to support, rather than supplant, the parental role.

The bishops also usefully focus our attention on moral reasoning and ultimate ends. It is refreshing to find at least one report on children that does not insist on framing the issue in terms of dollars saved and lost or the health of our economy. Mercifully, the Bishops refrain from calling every good thing an "investment." They know that more vital matters are at stake.

At the same time, like the report of the National Commission on Children and other recent initiatives, *Putting Children First* does call for a wide range of new public policies. The bishops want better health care and more affordable housing. They want more jobs. They endorse child tax credits, family-sensitive workplace policies, tougher requirements for child support payments, and a host of other public initiatives—almost all of which the authors of this essay find reasonable and commendable.

Given these virtues, therefore, it may seem uncharitable to find fault with *Putting Children First*. Yet the bishops' statement is deeply flawed. And what is wrong is not simply this or that detail, but rather the document's master idea, its defining narrative. Throughout, the bishops offer us not only flabby and misguided sociology, but also, and more seriously, flabby and misguided moral reasoning.

First, sociology. When the bishops speak of the family, they have a particular family in mind. It is the family of women and children. To be sure, they speak of "parents" and, late in their discussion, applaud the ideal of the two-parent family. On page twenty-five of the twenty-nine-page statement, they put in a brief good word for fathers. But clearly the family model that animates their concern and dominates their report is the female-headed family.

The bishops marshal all the familiar evidence to support their focus on the mother-child family. They point to the growing number of children who grow up in single-parent families, most "headed by women who are more likely to live in poverty." They state that "mothers and children make up an increasing proportion of the homeless in our land." They tell us that women and children are exploited both economically and sexually, assaulted daily by pornography and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. They remind us that women and children are more likely than others to go to bed hungry. In essence, the bishops tell us, the mother-child family is the home of the helpless and the exploited.

This particular sociological understanding of contemporary family life, so prevalent in today's elite discussions, might be termed the sociology of the Christmas appeal. Its core moral claim is captured by the venerable holiday reminder: "Remember the neediest." Only Scrooge, of course, could ignore such an appeal. Certainly, the many women and children in our society who struggle in harsh circumstances to live decent lives ought to exert a powerful claim on our compassion and on our resources. Yet by making the beleaguered mother-child family the central focus of their attention, the bishops offer an inadequate and distorted account of family problems.

First, with the one exception noted above, the bishops are virtually silent on the subject of men. Fathers and husbands are largely missing from this document. The word "husband" does not appear at all; the gender-neutral "parent" or "parenting" is much preferred to its gender-specific variants. The bishops offer no affirmative portrait of paternal authority, provision, or influence. If a young man in a parish in Omaha or Austin were to read this document, seeking wisdom and instruction on how to be a good family man, he would find little guidance. By ignoring the role of men in the family, the bishops overlook what is arguably the most consequential trend in American society today: male flight from family life.

Approximately one-third of our nation's children today are growing up without the daily provision, discipline, sponsorship, and love of their biological fathers. The empirical evidence on the social costs of fatherlessness is so strong that one wonders why the bishops overlook it. Some 70 percent of juveniles in long-term correctional facilities, for example, did

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not live with their father while growing up. And considering their focus on poor children, it is especially odd that the bishops ignore the relationship between the growing incidence of fatherlessness and the growing incidence of child poverty. It is simply not the case that contemporary economic trends are driving otherwise stable families into poverty, as one might conclude from *Putting Children First.* In fact, even in difficult economic times, nine out of ten children in mother-father families avoid poverty. Rather, it is that a contemporary social trend—fatherlessness—is driving children into poverty. Today, for the first time in our nation's history, the majority of all poor children live in mother-headed households.

Finally, the bishops' sociology offers an excessively narrow reading of the family as a social institution. The bishops portray families as needy claimants on our compassion. Utterly missing from this document is any sense of the family as a core institution of the civil society: an institution that society depends on to provide essential social goods. The bishops tell us what families need but seem oblivious to what families do.

Imagine that the bishops were describing not families, but business corporations. Surely, they would not limit their focus to the needs of unemployed workers. Surely, they would consider the institutional role of the corporation in capital formation, in the structure and organization of work, and in the distribution of goods and services.

Yet families, like corporations, serve a broad range of social purposes. We depend on the family to transmit values, to foster character and competence, and to generate social goods. If corporations produce economic capital, families produce social capital. Consequently, for families, as for corporations, the moral category of compassion is simply insufficient, by itself, as a way of describing the social goods that are at stake.

Their weak sociology leads the bishops into weak moral reasoning. *Putting Children First* would have us believe that the principal problem facing families and children is a deficit of societal compassion and political will. To improve the well-being of children, the bishops say, we must "use our values, voices, and votes to hold our public officials accountable and shape a society that puts children first." Yet this challenge, stirring as it is, is insufficient. It fails to acknowledge that the principal problem facing children today has to do less with flawed public policy than with flawed moral behavior.

We see the bishops as the inheritors and custodians of a rich repository of moral wisdom on the family. In a society dominated by the trendy fashions of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, we look to the bishops for stronger stuff: for much-needed help in writing our cultural scripts of family life. This is their special province and unique responsibility. Yet in the effort to reconcile trendy sociology with their own moral tradition, the bishops fail to do what we most count on them to do: make moral distinctions. Instead, they employ language that obscures or conflates morally distinguishable situations and actions.

The bishops base their moral claim on the biblical injunction of St. James: "Religion pure and undefiled before God is this, to care for orphans and widows in their affliction." "In our day," they go on, "the orphans and widows are poor children and single parents." This statement is no mere rhetorical flourish. It is the bishops' central explanatory metaphor, the sustaining core of their morality. And it is deeply confused.

In our biblical and republican traditions, a specific meaning and moral claim is associated with widows and orphans. They have lost husbands and fathers through death. Widows are women whose husbands have died, and orphans in this sense are not so much children without parents as children without fathers. It is this meaning of widow and orphan that Abraham Lincoln intends when, in his Second Inaugural, he calls upon the nation to "bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan. . . ."

It is simply not true—empirically, historically, or morally—that there is no meaningful difference between "mother-headed households" and "widows and orphans." The escalating number of mother-headed families in our society today is not due to the deaths of fathers, but instead to two behavioral phenomena: divorce and out-of-marriage childbirth. On these two issues, we might expect the bishops to speak up. Yet they not only fall curiously silent about those issues, they employ a framework of analysis of family life that invites the rest of us to ignore them as well.

In their equivocations, the bishops offend common understandings and diminish their own moral authority. Ordinary men and women understand that there is a difference between a widow and an unwed mother. There is a difference between a man who dies and a man who deserts his family. And there is all the moral difference in the world between the widows and orphans of whom St. James spoke and the mother-headed families of whom the bishops speak.

Just as they fail to confront men's failure to meet their family obligations, the bishops also ignore the moral agency of women. While it is true that the mother-child bond remains the strongest of all family bonds, women, too, increasingly make choices today that are hostile to children's interests. And while it is true that women have been abused,

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abandoned, and exploited, women are not simply victims in a cruel world. Women, too, determine outcomes for children through their own activity. The most striking example is the growing number of women who choose to have children outside of marriage. There are also women who divorce casually and frequently. Yet the bishops are so eager to avoid the appearance of sexism or gender bias that they scrupulously resist any criticism of women. The irony is that this failure to criticize women or to hold them morally accountable comes perilously close to the worst kind of sexism—treating women as moral inferiors.

The larger irony is that in their effort to be sociologically current and culturally relevant, the bishops seem to forget that their distinctive role is to criticize contemporary fashion. We look to the bishops to guide us in our moral choices, to offer models that are countercultural in the sense that they are not derived from contemporary secular culture. Yet the bishops' statement is anything but countercultural. It has no cultural bite. It would go down easily at a Beverly Hills fundraiser or at a meeting of the *New York Times* editorial board. What *Putting Children First* most conspicuously lacks is a consideration of moral agency and choice in the decline of children's well-being. Or, to put it more theologically, what is missing is a consideration of sin.

And herein, sadly, lies the final and greatest irony: The more the bishops call for compassion but ignore responsibility—the more they obscure and conflate moral categories, the more their script for family life resembles the scripts for "Murphy Brown"—the less influence they will retain as serious writers of our cultural script and the less authority they will wield as our teachers in matters of family life.

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Naming Good and Evil

Joyce A. Little

Eighty-one years ago, G. K. Chesterton wrote a book entitled *What's Wrong with the World?* His answer to that question was that, while there is general agreement as to what is wrong with the world, the real problem is that we cannot agree on what would be right. This absence of public consensus on what is good and right in life led him to remark in another work, *The Man Who Was Orthodox*, that "humanity has passed through every sort of storm and shipwreck but never before was it so doubtful which was the storm and which was the shipwreck, and which the ship and which the ship's crew; and what we are rescuing from what."

The situation we find ourselves in today is similar to that in which Chesterton found himself. We can still reach general agreement on the evil of such things as drugs and divorce, but we cannot seem to agree on how to deal with these problems, because we cannot agree on what would be right or good for society. This means that what is really at issue is not just abortion, or assisted suicide, or gay rights, or any number of other matters of public debate, but differing views of the nature of reality.

This is particularly true with regard to the situation the Catholic Church finds itself in today, embattled as it is both from without and from within by people whose fundamental views of reality are radically opposed to the Church's. In the first rank of those who hold views radically opposed to the views of the Church are the feminists, in particular those feminist theologians who call themselves Catholic. Indeed, the difference in views here is so great that what the Church calls good these women call evil, and what the Church calls evil these women call good. Even more alarming is the fact that the feminists themselves are only the tip of a very large iceberg in society today. Large numbers of Americans, and their numbers grow with each passing day, have adopted, to one degree or another, some consciously and some not, a view of reality not fundamentally different from that of feminism. That view of reality rests, in the final analysis, upon a rejection of the sacramentality of the good creation as the Catholic Church understands that sacramentality.

By way of illustrating the fact that we are confronted with two very different views about what is happening in our world and about wherein lies the good, let us consider certain observations of, on the one hand, the current Pope, and on the other, two feminist theologians.

In 1976, the then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla was invited by Paul VI to deliver his annual Lenten retreat. The Cardinal's talks on that occasion have been published in book form under the English title *Sign of Contradiction*. In the course of one of them, John Paul II notes with regard to the Fall in the third chapter of Genesis that it was only the first step in a larger pattern of fallenness that in history has taken man farther and farther from God, leading in the final analysis to what he characterizes as "the extreme form of denial, the one adopted by present-day man." That extreme form of denial, according to John Paul II, is one that has led modern men and women to embrace, with all of its implications, the temptation offered by the serpent that we ourselves become like God, that we in fact take His place.

John Paul II sees in the modern world an active, willful displacement of God by man and believes that this displacement of God, more than any other single factor, explains the human catastrophes of the twentieth century. When we turn to the feminists, however, we are confronted with a different account of good and evil.

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Sr. Sandra Schneiders, Professor of New Testament and Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, last year published a book entitled *Beyond Patching*, in which she speaks of the "God of the Judeo-Christian revelation" as "just men-writ-large," of the Bible as "an intrinsically oppressive text," and of hierarchy as "the root of sinful structures," the eradication of which is "non-negotiable." The central thesis of her book is that the Catholic Church has become so corrupt over the centuries that it is, indeed, "beyond patching." A whole new church must, from the feminist point of view, be constructed, because, as Schneiders puts it, "At some deep level [the feminist Catholic] believes in the Catholic faith tradition, but she sees more and more clearly that every aspect of it is not just tainted but perverted by the evil of patriarchy. It is not that the tradition has some problems; the tradition is the problem."

Mary Daly, Professor of Theology at Boston College and one of the early radicals of the feminist movement, saw clearly the ultimate implications of this line of thinking some eight years ago, when, in her book *Pure Lust*, she concluded that the fallen angels are "important inspirers and allies" of women, because they were the first to reject the Father God of Judaism and Christianity.

Is hierarchy the real evil of our world and is the Judeo-Christian God nothing more than its tool for oppressing women and others, or is the real evil of our world the human will gone awry to the point that it wishes to displace that God? These two points of view present us with a clear either/or. The conflict here, however, is not really about the nature of God, however much it might appear to be. The real conflict is about the nature of man, about what it means to be human. At the heart of that conflict lies the Catholic view of the sacramentality of creation and of the fall as a rejection by man of that sacramentality.

I

A sacrament, as we all know, is an outward or material sign that effects or actualizes or brings into existence the grace it symbolizes. A sacrament, therefore, is a created, material entity symbolic of something that transcends the purely created order of which it is a part. In traditional language, it symbolizes and actualizes supernatural realities within the created order. Bread and wine, for example, become the Body and Blood of Christ, just as baptismal water effects or actualizes the new life of sanctifying grace in the believer.

It follows from this understanding of sacrament that, if creation is sacramental, there must be something in creation itself that corresponds to this definition of sacrament. And in point of fact, in the creation narratives in the first two chapters of Genesis, we find one created being who is constituted in his creation by God as a sacrament. That being is man himself. The critical text is Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

There are two elements in this passage which tell us that man is constituted as a sacrament right at the outset. First, man is created in the image of God. This means that man is created to be a sign or a symbol of God in creation; indeed, man is, according to Genesis, the only being created to be a sign or a symbol of God. However, this alone is not enough to constitute man as a sacrament, because a sacrament is not just a sign, a sacrament is an outward or material sign. Although man is obviously a material being, this does not necessarily also make him a sacrament. For it is possible to think that man is the image of God only insofar as man is a spiritual being, as indeed so many Christians have thought over the centuries.

But the Genesis text not only says that man is made in the image of God, it also tells us explicitly that man is made in God's image as male and female. In other words, man's imaging of God is material as well as spiritual, as much bound up with his body as with his soul. It will be to the everlasting credit of Pope John Paul II that he has made his papacy the occasion for insisting upon the fact that our imaging of God, as given in the revelation, involves the whole human person in all of his psychosomatic reality. Indeed, the Pope speaks explicitly of the sacramental character of man's creation.

> The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, as a "body," by means of his "visible" masculinity and femininity. The body, in fact, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus be a sign of it.

The second chapter of Genesis adds a new dimension to our understanding of man's creation as male and female. There, in Adam's search for a suitable helpmate, is revealed the fact that man's creation as male and female has a communal dimension to it, a communal dimension that is explicitly marital. As John Paul II puts it, "the words which express the first joy of man's coming to existence as 'male and female' (Gen. 2:23) are followed by the verse which establishes their conjugal unity (Gen. 2:24), and then by the one which testifies to the nakedness of both, without mutual shame (Gen. 2:25)." Herein is revealed to

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us, as the Pope puts it, the nuptial significance of the body which, as male and female in the communion of marital love, makes visible in the created order the invisible reality of the Trinity as a community of love.

All of this may seem quite beautiful, leaving one to wonder how any human being could possibly take exception to such an understanding of man, male and female. But there is a catch here. In the Genesis text, it comes in the form of a command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What relationship, if any, does this command have to the creation of Adam and Eve as the sacrament of God?

Many people view God's command in Genesis as nothing more than a way of establishing his authority as Creator over Adam and Eve as His creatures, and their disobedience as nothing more than a refusal to accept His authority. But much more than this is involved in the text itself. We know this if only because of the form the command takes, a form often overlooked by careless readers, as exemplified by the fact that so many people advert to the "apple" Eve ate. Eve did not eat an apple. The tree is not an apple tree, and that alone should tell us that God's command is not simply an assertion of His authority. If it were, an apple tree would serve His purpose as well as any other. But when the text avoids something simple like "apple tree" and goes out of its way to provide us with something as cumbersome as "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," it does not, as they say, take the brains of a rocket scientist to grasp that something more than a mere assertion of authority is at stake.

Let us, for a moment, try to put ourselves in the position of Adam and Eve, and see what implications flow from the situation in which they find themselves. God has created us in his image and likeness. This defines us. As the Pope points out, "There is no adequate definition of man but this one." It also defines our end, or purpose, in creation. We are supposed to make visible both in and to the world the invisible reality of our Creator. Now just what, concretely, are we supposed to do under these circumstances? There is only one answer to this question, and it is so obvious it hardly bears mentioning: namely, we don't have the remotest notion what we are supposed to do, because we don't have the remotest notion what it is we are supposed to be rendering visible. Only God knows God; only God knows how his own nature and inner life can be rendered visible. Therefore, only God knows man and what man is supposed to do. Man cannot define this for himself and at the same time be faithful to his purpose, to his vocation, if you will, of imaging God to the rest of the world. And so we arrive at the command.

Much ink has been spilt over the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Most people are tripped up by the word "knowledge." We think of knowledge primarily in the sense of information acquired about already-existing realities. However, this meaning of knowledge cannot possibly apply to the text, since there are no already-existing evils to be known. Everything God has created is very good (Gen. 1:31). In the Old Testament, however, knowledge can also mean the ability to name something. This form of knowledge, naming, does presuppose knowledge in the ordinary sense, that one knows enough about something to be able to name it.

We see knowledge, in this sense, being exercised by Adam when he names the animals. His naming of the animals presupposes that, as they parade by him, he is able to understand them well enough to give them names. And that does indeed seem, from within the text, to be the case, because in the first instance, God accepts the names Adam gives the animals, and, second, Adam certainly does understand the animals well enough to recognize that a suitable helpmate for him is not to be found among them.

The knowledge of good and evil might therefore be rendered as the ability to name things as good and evil, an ability which presupposes a sufficient understanding of reality to make such naming possible. It must also refer to good and evil not in some general sense, because in a general sense there is nothing evil in existence. It must refer to good and evil in a relative sense, that is, good and evil in relation to Adam and Eve themselves. In other words, the command God gives them can be translated as: Do not claim the ability to name or to define what is good and evil for yourselves, because you do not know enough about me to know what you are supposed to do to be my image in the world. Only I know how I can properly be imaged, and therefore only I can tell you what is good and evil for you.

Man is given dominion over the world. The world does not image God, and therefore man does not have to understand God in order to have dominion over it. In fact, as the Pope points out, the world is created as gift for man. Therefore, the world is properly the sphere of man's governance. But man is not given dominion over himself. That dominion God reserves for himself, because only God knows what it means to image God. In fact we see God use that capacity to name good and evil twice in the Genesis text, first, when He names everything He has created as "very good," and second, when He names, for Adam and Eve, the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as evil for them.

The Fall comes about because of an act of pride, because of an act of disobedience, to be sure. But

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it also comes about because Eve does exactly what God forbids, not just in the literal, but also in the symbolic, sense. In the literal sense, she eats the fruit she has been commanded not to eat. In the symbolic sense, she names good and evil for herself, the very thing the eating of the fruit symbolizes as the forbidden act. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6). God had named the eating of this fruit evil for Adam and Eve. Eve, on the other hand, looked at the fruit and came to the conclusion it would be good for her, a source of wisdom in fact. And so what God had named evil she renamed good.

God acknowledges this usurpation of his authority by saying, "See, the man has become like us, knowing good and evil." Adam and Eve claimed for themselves the right to moral autonomy, the right to decide for themselves what they would regard as good and evil and not to accept good and evil as God defined it for them. In so doing, they rejected the sacramentality of the good creation, because they rejected the vocation God had written into their very being, the call to image Him rather than to assert themselves. In the words of the Pope:

> Creating man and woman in his own image and likeness, God wills for them the fullness of good, or supernatural happiness, which flows from sharing in his own life. *By committing sin man rejects this gift* and at the same time wills to become "as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5), that is to say, deciding what is good and what is evil independently of God, his Creator. The sin of the first parents has its own human "measure": an interior standard of its own in man's free will, and it also has within itself a certain "diabolic" characteristic, which is clearly shown in the Book of Genesis (3:15).

II

Feminist theologians are today thought by most Catholics to be interested primarily in the ordination of women to the priesthood. This might have been true at one time, many years ago, but that time is long past. Feminist theologians today have, by and large, abandoned all efforts to breach the priestly fraternity, because they have, by and large, abandoned all interest in priesthood as the Catholic Church defines it. What the feminists have learned was that their own initial presuppositions, which had led them at the beginning into conflict with the Church over two primary issues—contraception and the male priesthood—in fact constitute a wholesale denial of sacramentality at every level of Church teaching, whether it be the seven sacraments, the Church as sacrament of Christ, the marital union of Christ and the Church as the great sacrament, or the sacramentality of the good creation rooted in the creation of male and female as the image of God. Indeed, it was their denial of the sacramentality of creation in the human sacramental imaging of God that undermined for them the entire sacramental structure erected on that foundation. And that denial was implicit in the origins of the feminist opposition to Church teaching on contraception and on the male priesthood.

When Rosemary Radford Ruether declared, in defense of the ordination of women, that "Theologically speaking, then, we might say that the maleness of Jesus has no ultimate significance," she was really saying that no one's maleness or femaleness has theological, that is to say, sacramental, significance. And when feminists from all sides declared that the ban on contraception kept them imprisoned in their biology from which they demanded liberation, they were declaring war on any notion of the body as sacramentally significant. Nothing made this clearer than the feminist manifesto urging women to take control of their reproductive functions. The language itself betrayed a view of the human body as a kind of machine that could be artificially manipulated to produce or not produce, and of babies as objects, that is, as the products of a process of reproduction. These two strokes, by which human sexuality in particular and then the body in general were robbed of any sacramental significance, made it impossible to sustain any notion of sacramentality consistent with the Catholic faith. Catholic feminist theologians, for good or for ill, soon found themselves engaged not in a refurbishing of the Church and the world, but in a total destruction and reconstruction of both.

In a seminal feminist work, *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (1979), the two editors, Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, observed in the introduction that "feminists have called their task a 'new naming' of self and world." It was already apparent then that this new naming of self and world was simply the most recent rerun of Eve's renaming of the forbidden fruit back in the garden of Eden. But this renaming constituted, as it does today, the heart of the feminist agenda. Without this renaming, liberation as the feminists conceive it is not possible. For what they seek is precisely a liberation from the constraints of being called to image God. They wish to be self-actualized, self-realized beings, conforming to no one's image, not even God's, but naming for themselves just who and what they shall be. As Mary Daly put it, "Metamorphosing women do not imitate/copy some 'fully realized' paternal form or model. Rather,

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we are Realizing/Forming/Originating. . . . We already have the powers to will our own further evolution."

In all fairness to Daly and her colleagues, it should be noted that they are operating with a view of reality in which there is no Creator God, there is no call to image God as male and female, there is no revelation apart from female consciousness itself, and then only when that consciousness has gone through a process of consciousness-raising in which the unreality of the Christian revelation becomes transparently obvious. Once this consciousness is achieved, the view that we were created in the image of God and the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are seen to be nothing but two parts of a single larger process by which the powerful males of the past have defined man and morality in order to oppress everyone else. As a woman in the audience of a "Moral Perspectives on Abortion" panel at a conference sponsored by Women Church Convergence, a feminist body, put it so succinctly, "We have assumed that since patriarchy has defined the fetus as human life, we then call ourselves murderers when women choose to abort. . . . I'm *sick* of males defining our morality. For God's sake, let us, *as women*, decide."

From the feminist point of view, there is no trustworthy revelation of God in history. Everything that purports to be revelation is actually nothing more than the construction of human beings intent on some agenda. History is always and everywhere the record of the victors, and this includes every record ever made, including, of course, the Bible. Everything is a form of propaganda pushing somebody's ideology. Nothing is to be trusted at face value. This is what the feminists mean by their "hermeneutics of suspicion." It is on this foundation of suspicion that the feminists have constructed their ideological alternative to Christian faith.

The alternative view of reality supplied by feminism is apparent in the use feminists make of consciousness-raising itself. Consciousness-raising is a way of coming to view reality differently than one has previously seen it. Once this process has been accomplished, one is in a position, as the editors of *Womanspirit Rising* put it, to rename oneself and the world and thus to reshape the very nature of oneself and the world. Reality, according to this view, begins in the human mind and then proceeds to change the outer or material world, beginning with the body itself. All of reality is shaped by the human mind. In the past, according to this view, the human minds shaping reality were male. The future is to be shaped by the minds of women raised to this new consciousness of reality.

Most people are surprised when they first hear that witchcraft is enjoying an enormous revival in feminist circles, but there is a very important reason for this. Witchcraft is the very antithesis of the Catholic faith. It could find no place in a world informed by the faith. Once a view of reality diametrically opposed to Catholicism reappeared in the world, however, witchcraft was once again able to come into its own.

Why is witchcraft the antithesis of the Catholic faith? Starhawk, the witch employed by Fr. Matthew Fox at his Creation Spirituality Institute in California, tells us that the word "witch" comes from the Anglo-Saxon root word "Wicca" or "Wicce," which means "to bend or shape." According to Starhawk, witches of the past were "those who could shape the unseen to their will." The unseen, the invisible, is in this view of things at the disposal of the human will, to be shaped (rendered material, that is) as the human will sees fit to shape it. This is the very antithesis of the creation narratives in Genesis. There the unseen, the invisible God, names things and, in so doing, shapes them and calls them into existence. The unseen shapes the seen to His will. In the case of the creation of man, the process is carried even further. God not only calls man into existence but specifically shapes him in such a way that man is able to image or render visible the unseen or God himself. God (the unseen) does not conform himself to the will of man, God expects man to conform himself to the will of God, and, most importantly, in so doing, to conduct his life, including his bodily life and most especially including his sexual life, in such a way as to render visible in the world an authentic image of the inner life of the Trinity. In witchcraft, the witch assumes the position of God, bending and shaping the unseen as she sees fit.

Hence, when the Pope says, for example, as he did in *Familiaris Consortio*, that when couples have recourse to contraception they are altering the value of total self-giving or love, feminists not only agree but assert that this is precisely what they are intent on doing. They are renaming themselves and the world, they are bending or shaping the unseen, in this case love, to their own will.

It should not surprise us that the feminist view of reality ultimately issues in the total displacement of God and the installation of man (or, rather, woman) in God's place. God in creation defined man as His image. That is the only definition and purpose for our existence that God has inscribed in our being. He has left us free to accept it or to reject it, but He has not supplied us with any alternatives to it. Hence, when we reject the definition and purpose that He has inscribed in our being, as the feminist view does, we have only two choices at our disposal. We may choose, as nihilists do, to take the position that man has no particular meaning or purpose in life. "Life's a bitch and then you die," as cynical teenagers are wont to put it.

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Or we may choose, as the feminists among others do, to get into the business of defining our own meaning and purpose in life. In so doing, we usurp the place of God; we become our own gods. This does not change the fact that all paths lead to the grave, but it does mean that every person is now free to define for himself just what path he will take to his own particular grave.

In the final analysis, this freedom to define reality for ourselves is the liberation that feminism has preached from the beginning. One might argue that being called to image God is an inestimable privilege, but it is a privilege the feminists and many others today would and do gladly forfeit in the name of a newfound liberation from all of the constraints that living out our lives as the image of God places upon us. Those constraints, seen in the Gospel as necessary forms of self-mastery that ultimately liberate us to the greatest freedom of all, the freedom to be the sons and daughters of God, are experienced today by many people as more confining than the worst of prisons.

III

Feminism, as already noted, is but the tip of an iceberg—an iceberg, already large, that is growing daily. The feminists say, sometimes in terms far more sophisticated and even sometimes far more honest that many Americans would be comfortable hearing, what those Americans themselves really believe and already practice in their own lives.

This point was made much more effectively than any theologian could make it by John Chancellor, in his commentary on *NBC Nightly News* on the night of December 4, 1990, regarding the indictment of Dr. Jack Kevorkian for the aid he had given a woman to kill herself in the back of his van by means of his so-called "death machine." Over the past thirty years, Chancellor said, we have witnessed an enormous change of values in this country. This change, according to Chancellor, began in the 1960s with the introduction of the pill and other forms of contraception that made it possible for women to take control of their fertility. Indeed, as he pointed out, contraception has given women more power and control than either sex had ever had before over who enters this world and who does not. This "revolution of immense importance," in turn, has provoked a situation in which, as Chancellor put it, "our system of values is changing so fast we can hardly keep up. One of the themes of change is that people are taking more and more control of their bodies and their lives." This change in attitude, according to Chancellor, is something the law has not heretofore taken sufficiently into account. Hence, in his view, cases such as that of Kevorkian are to be welcomed, because "we need some guidelines on how to behave when people want to take control of their deaths."

John Chancellor is right in his analysis of the impact of the contraceptive pill. All that remains to be said in that regard is that it took him until 1990 to figure out what Paul VI saw in 1968.

Chancellor's analysis was borne out even more recently in last year's publication of *The Day America Told the Truth,* a description and analysis, based on lengthy anonymous polls conducted around the country, of American religious and moral beliefs. Although some have criticized the methodology employed in this survey, the findings of the book's authors, James Patterson and Peter Kim, are nevertheless worthy of attention. Patterson and Kim discovered, for example, that based on their poll, only 13 percent of the American public claim to accept all of the Ten Commandments. Only 40 percent accept five or less of the Ten Commandments as binding. The authors point out that Americans by and large no longer consult any traditionally recognized authorities when it comes to moral issues. "When we want to answer a question of right and wrong, we ask ourselves. What we *don't* do is what people have done for a long, long time: take counsel and advice from our religious and political authorities, from the press, from our schools. . . . We are the law unto ourselves. We have made ourselves the authority over church and God."

People intent on controlling their bodies and their lives are people intent on defining themselves and their purpose for existing. They are no longer interested, consciously at least, in living their lives in such a way as to make visible in the world the invisible mystery of God. They have set themselves up as morally autonomous agents, defining for themselves what is good and what is evil. Whether consciously or unconsciously (and I think, in the vast majority of cases, it is unconscious), they are not merely tasting the forbidden fruit, they are claiming it as their most precious right.

In 1882, Nietzsche, the great German nihilist philosopher, published a work whose English title is *The Joyful Wisdom* or *The Gay Science.* That work contained his famous parable of the madman who comes to the marketplace early in the morning to declare that God is dead, that we have killed God. Those gathered in the marketplace do not understand what he is talking about (hence their view that he is mad), which leads the madman finally to conclude:

> I have come too early . . . my time has not come yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering—it has not yet reached the ears of man. Lightning and thunder require time, the light of the stars requires time, deeds require time even after they are

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> done, before they can be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—*and yet they have done it themselves.*

Were it possible for Nietzsche to see our society today, I think he would say that his parable is as true now as it was 110 years ago. In other words, I think he would say that we have killed God, that is to say we have effectively eliminated God from our lives, but we still do not recognize that we have done so. Therefore anyone who would proclaim to us that we have done this deed would still be regarded as mad.

Nevertheless, and at the risk of being thought mad, I have to say that I think we have, by and large, effectively eliminated God from our lives today in America without yet having clearly faced the fact that we have done so. Americans claim in overwhelming numbers to believe in God. Patterson and Kim found that 90 percent of the people whom they polled indicated that they truly believe in God. But their poll raised questions about the nature of that belief.

> In every single region of the country, when we asked how people make up their minds on issues of right and wrong, we found that they simply do not turn to God or religion to help them decide about the seminal or moral issues of the day.
>
> For most people, religion plays virtually no role in shaping their opinions on a long list of important public questions. This is true even for questions that seem closely related to religion: birth control, abortion, even teaching Creationism and the role of women in the clergy.
>
> On not one of those questions did a majority of people seek the guidance of religion in finding answers. Most people do not even know their church's position on the important issues.

The unwillingness of people to be guided by religion in matters of morality in favor of their own standards of good and evil tells us a lot about their beliefs—or perhaps more to the point—their lack of beliefs regarding God. Again, Patterson and Kim note this connection.

> We have established ourselves as the authority on morality. We now choose which commandments to believe and which ones not to believe. Clearly, the God of the 1990s in America is a distant and pale reflection of the God of our forefathers. This is not the "jealous God" of the Old Testament—six in seven people think that it is okay not to believe in God. Rather, Americans seem to use God to refer to a general principle of good in life—or, sometimes, He (or She) is the creator who set off the Big Bang but doesn't intervene in human affairs.
>
> For most Americans, God is not to be feared or, for that matter, loved.

This is precisely the sort of thing Nietzsche had in mind when he had his madman say that we have killed God.

IV

If God created man in the image of God, then, even prior to the Incarnation, in the very order of creation itself, man is sacramentally linked to God. When man refuses to be the sacrament of God, the only definition God has inscribed in his being, he continues to exist as a material being, but he is no longer a sign or symbol, but only a cipher, signifying nothing whatsoever.

Unwilling to be God's image in the world and unable, whatever claims some may make to the contrary, to become God in any serious sense of the word, modern man seeks high and low for something, almost anything, to inform him, to give him an identity: the cosmic consciousness of New Age, the magic and witchcraft of goddess mythology, the archetypes of Jungian psychology, Joseph Campbell's hero of a thousand faces, Carl Sagan's voyage through the Cosmos, the cults of Elvis, Marilyn, and Madonna, Robin Leach's visits with the rich and famous, 1-900's psychic counselors and personal astrologers, even in alarming numbers the demonic powers promised by Satanic cults. Virtually no stone is left unturned in this frenetic search for some hint or clue as to where to go from here.

Walker Percy, the novelist and convert to the Catholic faith, said in a self-interview published in *Esquire* in December of 1977 that

> Despite the catastrophes of this century and man's total failure to understand himself and deal with himself, people still labor under the illusion that a theory of man exists. It doesn't. As bad and confused as things are, they have to get even worse before people realize they don't have the faintest idea what sort of creature man is. Then they might want to know.

Man is created to be the image of God, the sacrament of God. He is created, in short, to make visible in the world, as male and female in the union of marital love, the invisible reality of divine love. The catch to this in creation, as I said earlier, comes in the form of the command. The catch to this in redemption comes in the form of the cross. The

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primary meaning of the cross, according to John Paul II, is that "Love not only uplifts us, takes us out of ourselves; it also lays burdens on us. And perhaps the burdens tell us more about love than do the moments of ecstasy and spiritual *élan*."

Today, we are in flight from the burdens divine love implants within us and lays upon us. We are far more interested in our rights that in our responsibilities, in what we can claim from others than in what we can give to them. But even in this fallen state we have created for ourselves, we can never entirely destroy the good creation of God and the human imaging of him which constitutes our greatest glory and our greatest suffering.

As Philip Rieff notes in his book *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*:

> There is no feeling more desperate than that of being free to choose, and yet without the specific compulsion of being chosen. After all, one does not really choose; one is chosen. This is one way of stating the difference between gods and men. Gods choose; men are chosen. What men lose when they become as free as gods is precisely that sense of being chosen, which encourages them, in their gratitude, to take their subsequent choices seriously.

We have lost the sense of being chosen, we have lost gratitude, we have lost responsible freedom, the taking seriously of the choices we make.

As Paul Johnson notes in *Enemies of Society*, "In the last resort, our civilization is what we think and believe. The externals matter, but they cannot stand if the inner convictions which originally produced them have vanished." The most urgent task facing Christians in society today is to be a visible image, a living sacrament, and thus a prophetic witness to the reality of divine love, to the reality that we have been chosen, to the reality that the burdens of love can be embraced and sustained. Only when Christians are willing to do this will we see a genuine renewal both of the Church and of the world. FT

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Academic Religion: Playground of the Vandals

Paul V. Mankowski

"When you say 'hill,' " the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."

"No, I shouldn't," said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last: "a hill can't *be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—"*

The Red Queen shook her head. "You may call it nonsense if you like," she said, "but I've *heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!"*

—Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass

Last year a national committee of Presbyterians composed a statement on sexuality called "Keeping Body and Soul Together." The document evidenced characteristics increasingly distinctive of the productions of American church bureaucracies: a cute journalistic title, a manifesto-like rhetorical swagger, the facile syntax of *Psychology Today*, and a predictable exhortation to Do What Thou Wouldst, caringly. It was rejected in the General Assembly by a vote of 534 to 31.

The resounding *No* given to "Keeping Body and Soul Together" is emblematic of a crisis affecting American religion as a whole: the profound and widening gap between ordinary churchgoers and the administrative *nomenklatura* which, largely through the oblique pressure of committee and caucus, has either gained control of the church executive or enfeebled those it doesn't control. This division is not (as yet) a rift between people and pastors; considering the number of highly publicized instances of grave scandal on the part of prominent clergy, the trust still extended by the laity to their ministers is astonishing. The suspicion and despair felt by those in the pew is directed, in the main, not toward those with a "cure of souls" but rather toward a new class of curial politician—or rather, toward the ecclesiastical triumphs of this class, since the individuals responsible for them are often hidden from the faithful by many layers of bureaucratic anonymity.

It has long been a commonplace of theological polemic to impugn the good will of a rival faction by attributing to it political motivations and cunning rather than genuinely religious zeal. All the more interesting, consequently, when a self-defined religious bloc claims political motives for itself. Some years ago theologian Hans Küng boasted of how many clandestine partisans he knew "at the switching points of the ecclesiastical apparatus," and more recently there has been talk in American Catholic circles of a "party of change" that "dominates the fields of liturgy, religious education, justice and peace offices, campus ministry, Catholic higher education, much popular theology, and the discipline of theology as a whole."

Now the fact remains indisputable that, in proportion as it has made a conquest of officialdom, the new clerisy, the "party of change" operating across the denominational map, has further repelled and alienated the overwhelming majority of churchgoers, *viz.*, simple people who pray, who worship God. Nor is the cause hard to find, for this new clerisy is by and large contemptuous both of the

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beliefs of the faithful and of the tradition in which these beliefs are nurtured. Indeed, the prime effort of this detachment of the knowledge class is precisely to insulate the common man from authentic religious tradition, so as to render him more easily manipulable by conventional political pressures.

The new clerisy (in which I include both lay and ordained functionaries) defies analysis in terms of standard ecclesial boundaries; a Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist who belong to this set are likely to have more in common with one another than each has with his own bishops or with those of his coreligionists who are not of the "party of change." What is shared is not a set of doctrinal propositions but a culture: in this case, a culture institutionally cradled by the liberal seminaries, religion departments, and divinity schools of North America. As a consequence, what is common to all is seldom made explicit, for it is in its unreflective or unconscious operations that a culture is most profoundly unitive. Every culture protects its integrity by oblique means of discipline; every culture breeds its own skepticisms and its own credulities; every culture has peculiar bigotries and suffers certain fools gladly. To understand a society—including a society of churchmen—entails bringing to light what is hidden, making the implicit explicit, flagging those arguments which (for the insider) don't need to be made.

It is toward this end—elucidating the culture of the new clerisy and the crisis it has provoked—that the American Academy of Religion is useful, especially the AAR on display at its Annual Meeting. For it is when the filters are off, as it were, and it can speak to its own membership in its own voice, that an institution is most revelatory of its purposes and convictions.

> *"For instance, now," she went on, "there's the King's Messenger. He's in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin until next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all."*

To the uninitiated, one of the most striking features of this learned society is the discrepancy between its professed policy and its actual conduct. We are told in its statement of purpose that the AAR exists to foster a "critical awareness about the study of religion"; further, that "there are no religious conditions of membership, and the organization itself is not advocative, save for the highest standards in the teaching and study of religion."

Now, the notion of critical scholarship is not univocal, but it seems to me that it requires, at a minimum, five procedural commitments. First, the belief that pedigree and accidents of upbringing are irrelevant to one's eligibility to enter a scholarly conversation and one's capacity to grasp the truths therein elicited. Second, a denial of a priori favoritism to truth claims of individual participants. Third, an understanding that the disputant is expected to test his own hypothesis more severely than those of his opponents; i.e., in questionable matters, one always awards the benefit of the doubt to the adversary position. Fourth, the conviction that it is by superior argument and evidence that one defends a thesis, not in terms of intrinsic desirability. Finally, the concession that an opponent to one's thesis is not, simply in virtue of his opposition, a scoundrel.

The addresses I heard at the AAR, including those on which I reported earlier, were by and large so partisan, so blatantly advocative, that the pretense of a critical method of discourse was seldom even plausible. Most of the participants seemed to treat the Annual Meeting as a kind of party congress, with various scholarly colloquia as sideshows to the main events. Yet even here a curious asymmetry was perceptible. On the one hand, when more traditional believing Jews and Christians spoke about their own religions, they were clearly expected to maintain the scholarly proprieties of the critical method, and for the most part they were compliant. (One speaker admitted, "I use the expressions B.C. and A.D. [in preference to B.C.E. and C.E.] and I'm proud of it!" and for his candor was hissed by the audience.) On the other hand, partisans of the new religions and opponents of the old were constrained by none of the critical commitments suggested above.

This asymmetry was clearly manifest in the discussion of "patriarchy"—one of the prime bogeys of the new clerks. The consensus—virtually unchallenged in liberal seminaries and divinity schools—has it that the special cultic authority reserved to males in Judaism and Christianity is not only a pernicious institution but one that was assumed by men, in bad faith, as a self-serving ploy to buttress political, economic, and sexual tyranny. Of course, it may be the case that there are good arguments for the truth of this claim; what is remarkable is that no speaker showed the faintest awareness that such arguments remain to be made. The "scandal of patriarchy" served not as a *demonstrandum* but as an axiom of discourse, with the result that the Christian hierarchy and Jewish rabbinate became simple embodiments of villainy, and contempt expressed for these institutions required no justification. I took some wry amusement from the fact that one of the controversies at the AAR concerned the propriety of using analytical reasoning in the abolition of patriarchy. The terms of debate were: "Is it right to use the Master's tools to demolish the Master's house?" At issue were the means to the end; the end itself was taken for granted. For these latter-day Catos, the major premise of every pertinent syllogism was *delenda est patriarchia.*

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There is a telling historical irony in this particular indulgence of righteous indignation. The individuals currently reckoned by the new clerisy to be "patriarchs" include most of those whom traditionalist Jews, Roman Catholics, and the Christian Orthodox regard as their rightful religious authorities, and it is impossible that the antipathy directed at such authorities should not spill over into antipathy for those believers who esteem their own leadership. Moreover, the successful overthrow of patriarchy would mean nothing less, in concrete terms, than the extinction of rabbinic Judaism and the apostolic Christian churches. Thus an institution that calls itself "an inclusive learned society" and takes pride in having "no religious conditions of membership" has proven supremely tolerant of the rhetoric of belligerence employed by those sectaries who, in earlier times, were most anxious to rid the world of popery and the Elders of Zion. Because the prophets of chastisement are no longer Roundheads or Klansmen but often well-spoken scholars at Ivy League divinity schools, and because the scandal of patriarchy enjoys the status of a self-evident truth, this bigotry goes largely unremarked by its defenders. As Chesterton observed, some men believe their dogmas so strongly that they can't recognize them as dogmas.

> "Somebody *killed* something; *that's clear, at any rate*—"

Perhaps even more striking to the newcomer than its counter-masculinism is the AAR's preoccupation with sexuality. If this aspect of human life was too often neglected by earlier students of religion, compensation for the lack has certainly been made—and with a vengeance. Indeed, some of the addresses at the Annual Meeting were devoted so narrowly to sexual detail that they might have been read with (at least) equal appropriateness at a conference on psychotherapy or anthropology. Many speakers made no attempt to relate the subject of their papers to anything recognizable as prayer or morality or worship of God. Now it is obvious that the notion of "Religion" with which the American Academy concerns itself is a rather commodious term—virtually any area of human enthusiasm seems to qualify—and it was likewise clear that for many scholars present sexuality constituted this most fundamental enthusiasm, this ultimate ground of meaning: there is no need to make explicit one's connection of sex with religion if, at bottom, they are one and the same thing. Once again it is crucial to notice the "dogma that doesn't bark" in this environment: what is significant here is not that someone should connect sex with religion, or even displace one by means of the other, but that such connection or displacement should be simply *assumed*, should be deemed unworthy of defense or explanation. In trying to understand the cultural gap between, say, the authors of "Keeping Body and Soul Together" and the churchgoing Presbyterian, it is the unspoken equations that are most illuminating.

Why should sexuality fascinate students of religion so disproportionately to the rest of the population, both the academic community and society at large? A partial explanation can be sought in the sociology of education. Divinity schools tend to be one of the "soft underbellies" of American universities, having lower academic standards than other professional schools, and they are obliged to accept some students who (along with many highly qualified candidates) are ill prepared, intellectually and emotionally, for the tasks of graduate-level scholarship; thus, a borderline student obsessed with a particular exotic topic might find Religious Studies the only department willing to take him on. Further, since the perplexities of bedroom and bathroom have never taken a firm or enduring purchase on the first-rate minds of the Western university, there is much unexploited material here for the less fastidious investigator. Finally, the "primary evidence" for sexually oriented research often proves of abiding interest to those students discouraged in the attempt to master more formidable scholarly sources. To some extent, the AAR's emphasis on sex stems from the fact that Toni Morrison is easier to read in the original than Tertullian. (One speaker, in the course of a paper devoted to the former author, enthusiastically assured us that "sensuality pervades throughout her work.")

Yet I cannot rid myself of the conviction—admittedly subjective—that there is another, less innocent, motive at work in this preoccupation with sex. For want of a better term, I would call it an impulse to vandalism. The interest here displayed was overwhelmingly an interest in aberrant sexuality—evidenced not only in repeated protests against so-called "compulsory heterosexuality," but in a macabre litany of erotic pathology: mutilation, child abuse, incest, sadomasochism, ritual castration, and so on *ad nauseam*. The most benevolent spectator could hardly attribute more than a fraction of these "data" to a disinterested study of religion. Surely the contempt for authoritative morality in general, and for sexual morality in particular, combined with the too-obvious relish in the details of deviant venery, cannot be a coincidence.

The vandal's hatred is for the intact, the unstained, the integral; his delight is to chip the nose off the perfect statue, to soil the white wall with graffiti, to shatter the last unbroken window. His destruction is a record not only of malice but of conquest; as a dog is said to foul trees and lampposts as a way of marking territorial boundaries, so the

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vandal uglifies the yet-undefiled in order to chart the extent of his incursion into the world of order and decorum. By the same token, the ideals of sexual purity—consecrated virginity, the chaste yet fruitful marriage bed—have served as an emblem of the sacral function of Judaism and Christianity, as a redoubt of specifically *human* holiness: precisely the notion that the new clerisy wishes to expunge from religion. When scholars propose that the relation of nun to Church "might be reimaged in terms of a lesbian butch-femme relationship," or that the story of "God's sacrificing 'his' son legitimizes child abuse," we are not to imagine that their targets are chosen at random. There is an ill-concealed glee in this parading, as it were, the vivid sexual hells of Hieronymus Bosch through the ruined courtyards of Protestant academic propriety. The AAR, like the oldline divinity schools and seminaries which gave it birth, has become a playground of the Goth.

> *"Speak in French when you can't remember the English for a thing—and remember who you are!"*

Markedly absent from that part of its world which the new clerisy put on display at the Annual Meeting was a sympathy for, or even awareness of, the struggles and achievements of Anglo-American analytic philosophy. Whereas the French connection (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault) was continually invoked, names like Fodor, Anscombe, Quine, Dummett, or Plantinga were never in play. Alasdair MacIntyre, it is true, was the subject of three addresses, all of which were critical; the English tradition was generally viewed as a hostile force. In part this is due to the fact that the linguistic precision and logical refinement common to analytic philosophy is unsuited to more subjective or intuitionist approaches to religious phenomena; it is unlikely, for example, that the author of "An Exploration of Quilt Design as a Reasoning Process" would find a congenial mentor in Elizabeth Anscombe. Yet it is also true that clarity, univocity, and universal intelligibility are neither valued in themselves nor productive of the ends to which language is put by many of the deconstructionist camp, regardless of subject matter. Ambiguity is the desiratum, and the effect, as in these excerpts from AAR abstracts, is striking:

> Taylor's metaphorical "body," then, is an (ex)tension of the phallocentric and phallocratic technology of modern theology, now confined to a two-dimensional wordplay indifferent to the cries and joys of a richly signed wor(l)d.
>
> In Tibetan Buddhist systems there are hints of a compatible relationship between reason and orgasmic bliss, in that developed practitioners seek to utilize the blissful and powerful mind of orgasm to realize the truth and the all-good ground of consciousness. The suggestion is that the sense of bifurcation between reason and orgasmic bliss is the result of not appreciating the basic nature of mind.
>
> A feminist-informed, queerly placed interrogation is offered here of the representational matrices within which the stabilizing terms of gender may be opened up and overturned.

Thomas Kohler has brought to my attention the pertinent observations of Eric Voegelin on the peculiar semantic "estrangement" he met in Heidegger and that is so often found in current postmodernist writing. "We will all have the feeling [he says] as we read such texts that as far as linguistic expression is concerned, something is not in order, even if we can't immediately put our finger on what is wrong. . . . The text transposes factual relationships of our everyday world into a linguistic medium that begins to take on an alliterative life of its own, and thus loses contact with the thing itself. Language and fact have somehow separated from one another, and thought has correspondingly become estranged from reality." Voegelin adds that after prolonged exposure to such texts we can "whip ourselves up into a reality-withdrawing state of linguistic delirium." It is important to stress that this linguistic delirium marks the success and not the failure of the rhetoricians who bring it to birth. As in Lewis Carroll's Looking Glass Land, sense and nonsense here become the sole property of the powerful, bestowed according to the royal will; certainly the AAR suffers no shortage of Red Queens.

> *"When* I *use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."*
>
> *"The question is," said Alice, "whether you* can *make words mean so many different things."*
>
> *"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."*

By traditional standards of liberal scholarship the culture of the new clerisy is in nearly complete intellectual disarray. But of course it is precisely these standards that the new clerisy has disavowed. The bigotry manifest in the campaign against patriarchy flies in the face of pluralism, but what should we expect? Scholarly honor is merely one more remnant of an alien ethics that can be debunked as easily as any other. The obsession with sexual deviance is distressing to the normal religious

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believer, but the normal/deviant distinction is rejected a priori, and sex and religion are simply different "moments" in a rhetoric of power. Language has become detached from shared meanings, but propositional truth itself has been dismissed as a myth of the male tyrant. In short, what those outside this culture lament as degeneration, those inside commend as deconstruction.

The ascendancy of deconstructionist thought at the divinity schools and liberal seminaries, though curious enough, is not entirely unprecedented. The fascination of American ministers with a number of European thinkers (Jung and Marx are prime examples) has far exceeded the concern for religion that the authors themselves took thought to express; and the zeal with which these men were institutionalized into certain aspects of church life often surpassed efforts for accurate theoretical assessment of their writings. The religious enthusiast (whether Lollard or Marxist) frequently has an innate contempt for halfway measures and a constitutional impatience at the hesitations of the theologian. So, too, it seemed to me that Derrida and Foucault were embraced at the AAR with an alacrity not paralleled by any proportionately serious attempt to come to grips with their thought. One speaker, it is true, qualified her otherwise ringing endorsement of Foucault with the admission that "he was, after all, a white male"; yet I didn't hear at the Annual Meeting a single citation from any *text* of Derrida or Foucault or Lacan—remarkable, considering how fervently the names were invoked. One can't help recalling Bernard Levin's quip that some people pass their entire lives under the mistaken impression that they have read *Das Kapital.*

For all that, the believers were true believers. To the extent that I could make it out the party line runs like this. Everything that purports to be "revelation"—i.e., God's revelation of himself to men—is at bottom fiction. The authors of the fictions have constructed them so as to serve their own political purposes, and have employed the myth of divine communication in order to impose the fictions, by terror and enticement, as normative for all: fears of sanction and hopes of reward are dangled as carrot-and-stick before the oppressed subject, who is forced into the state of false consciousness called "faith." Emancipation takes the form of exposing the frauds of the tyrants by pointing out the political motives latent in the structures of religion earlier supposed to be "divinely ordained." Further, members of oppressed populations are urged to invent (or rediscover) fictions of their own in which the notions of authority and obedience have been replaced by that of the lone individual as creator and bestower of value.

From a theological point of view, this enlightened religion has the awkward disadvantage of being atheist, but clearly the cavil carries little weight with adherents among the new clerks. The number of self-professed Catholics, Episcopalians, and other Christians who hold these or similar views without evident embarrassment illustrates the obvious corollary that, since all doctrines are instances of political artifice, the doctrine of God is as dispensable as any other. So too, whenever the word "heresy" was mentioned at the AAR, it was invariably preceded by the phrase "so-called"—and quite properly, given the belief that the categories of orthodoxy and heresy are equally and indifferently the malign inventions of an oppressor.

By the same token, most atheist Catholics and others of the new clerisy feel no pressure to leave the Church. In general, what they look for from a church community has so little to do with assent to propositional articles of faith that the deficiency doesn't register (any more than it would occur to a modern Roman to abandon his city once he became convinced that Romulus never existed). Moreover, when a man believes he has "seen through the bluff" on which some institution is run, he tends not to accept the judgments of those he regards as still deluded, especially the judgment that he doesn't belong in the institution.

Exposure of the fraud of revelation and the demotion of God from a fact to a fiction does not, in this culture, result in the antireligious rancor typical of the propositional atheists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or in the tidy, well-lit materialism of Bertrand Russell and A. J. Ayer. Instead, "God" has become an infinitely plastic term, and the divine attributes can be tailored according to individual appetite and whim, with the sole proviso that God cannot be a jealous God, i.e., he cannot require anyone's fealty, nor pretend to the dignity of objective independent existence: such independence brings with it the inevitable structures of authority emancipation from which is the very wellspring of the new religion.

Of course, in using the pronoun "he" of God, I have obscured the fact that divine fatherhood is one of the attributes most cheerfully dispensed with. Thus, Barbara Whitmer of the University of Toronto asked her audience at the AAR, "Is it too late to go back to the Goddess?" inviting us not so much to apostasy as to a heightened political awareness of our culture of violence. So also Anne Hunter of Drew University reminded us that "feminist theologies have thoroughly examined the all-powerful, judgmental, male God, but little has been said about the male God who is all-seeing and all-knowing." Hunter proposed to draw out "the implications of this all-seeing male God as a deterrent to the ability of religious women to free themselves from abusive relationships with men." Unspoken but clearly operative in these examples

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is the assumption that, like a body of law, one needs to drop, add, and amend one's deities according to the changing hardships one faces. And, just as he who writes the laws governs the nation, whoever controls its rhetoric controls religion. The question that absorbs the modern student of divinity is not what is true about God in Himself, but whose hands are on the levers of power, who controls the discourse.

Perhaps it is not so paradoxical after all that those who, in church-state debate, protest the incursion of religion into politics are often the same people who work most energetically to politicize the churches. Their objection, of course, is to religious *authority*, to the recognition of objective and durable realities and standards of conduct, to a magisterium (however realized) beyond the grasp of democratic manipulation. The game is to free both church and state from the illusion of unchanging obligations to divine commandments or to laws of reason. "There is no 'outside' of politics," announced one AAR speaker, thus formulating what I take to be the prime, crystalline kerygma of the new religion: "All relations are essentially relations of power." The struggle is to insure that those who control the rhetoric by which power is exercised are fully enlightened individuals, those who can be relied upon to insure that correct politics will triumph. Implicit is the belief that power exists as a discrete, constant quantity, and should be redistributed among those populations, such as homosexuals and women, who have traditionally received lesser shares. Here the penetrating remarks of Elizabeth Kristol on the rhetoric of power are worth repeating. Commenting on "the disturbing necrophiliac tendencies in much of feminist history, as authors rush to embrace the very concepts they have just killed off," Kristol observes:

> The same phenomenon occurs when feminists take on language and religion, and for the same reason: women recognize that these . . . realms *wield* the greatest political and social power, and they thereafter assume these realms *confer* the greatest power.
>
> But power isn't like a currency that can be passed from hand to hand—let alone be stolen. It is intimately linked with the creative forces that brought it into being. There is no question women's histories are capable of being imaginative; often too much for their own good. But crocheting pasts is a far cry from creativity. What would be truly creative, at this point, is if feminist historians permitted their gazes to drift away from the "power structures" they so covet and allow them to fall on historical topics that are genuinely in need of attention and illumination. As it happens, that is a real route to power.

Like such feminists, the new clerks are political reductivists *à outrance*; and like such feminists, they are more intrigued by the politics of power than those of persuasion. In spite of their professing often radically democratic positions, they are rarely drawn to, or successful at, the consensus-building functions of political life, and this is true even within their respective churches. Just as in the civil domain the party of change has directed its energies more to victory in the courts than to constructing legislative majorities, so in the religious sphere it is in the growing bureaucracies that the party of change has found itself most welcome and most adept. As the North American churches have de-emphasized their pastoral and custodial responsibilities in favor of policy formation and management, the size and importance of the administrative apparatus has grown proportionally. The new clerisy has been quick to recognize and exploit the unique potentials of this intermediate level of influence—usually placed out of the reach of direct lay control, but at the same time resistant to pressures from the hierarchy. The earlier-noted list of functions "dominated" by the party of change bears repeating: "the fields of liturgy, religious education, justice and peace offices, campus ministry, higher education, much popular theology, and the discipline of theology as a whole." Few of us would disagree.

> *"I know what you're thinking about," said Tweedledum; "but it isn't so, nohow."*
>
> *"Contrariwise," continued Tweedledee, "if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic."*

After a sojourn among the new clerks in their native habitat (of which the AAR Annual Meeting is a prime example) the narrator finds himself in the unenviable position of Alice once she returned through the looking-glass to her family parlor. Not only are her traveling encounters exceptional, to put it mildly, but she has to admit that, e.g., her implausibly Talking Egg exists on the more familiar level as a plausibly dumb cat. Objections were made to the mention in my earlier article of an address in which a speaker characterized race, class, and sexual orientation as "overarching structures of domination," reinforced by religion, from which asylum was found in African-American quilting. Was this, after all, a contribution to be taken seriously? Perhaps not. But the same scholar, it should be noted, served as an official consultant to the U.S. Catholic bishops for their project of writing a pastoral letter on women—that fact, I suggest, might prompt some reflection, and not just among Catholics.

The *Kulturkampf*, the battle of "cultures in collision" for the symbols of our common life, has migrated out of the universities into most institu-

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tions, including the churches and synagogues, where it is entrenched with particular firmness. The religious wars declared in the 1980s will be fought not between denominations but within them: father against son, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law, functionaries against the faithful. For the dispute concerns not *how* one should worship but *whom*. As long as we pretend that the new clerks don't really mean what they say, we will continue to surrender the only essential clarity, forfeiting the One named I AM to "he/she might be"—and that ain't logic. Nohow. FT

Eden Park

this is not the woods
and wildlife is not
two chipmunks scampering
across the sidewalk

the trees stand here
in landscaped disorder
shrugging leaves with
seasoned indifference

approximating nature
I tell myself as birds
the real ones not
pigeons or sparrows
dart between branches

yet even the grass
seems untame somehow
and the ground itself
alive with uncertainty

as I stand for a moment
on this hill displaced
from concrete from glass
their inert familiarity

one life jumbled among many
I'm not alone I realize
yearning to belong in such
manufactured wilderness

while gently from below
come muffled growls
automobile grizzlies
lumbering along their
winding asphalt trails

Harry Newman

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Catholicism and the American Proposition

George Weigel

1991 marked the centenary of modern Catholic social teaching—the issuing of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII—and the bicentenary of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution. It might have come as something of a shock to the (very Protestant) Framers of the Constitution to be told that the future of their work at the Philadelphia Convention might someday be assessed against criteria established by a succession of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholic popes—as it might have come as a surprise to several of those popes to have been told that their work would be taken more seriously by some of the heirs of the Puritans than by some of the children of Rome. Yet that is precisely what happened at this juxtaposition of anniversaries. Catholic social teaching was very much "in play" in the ecumenical conversation about the future of the United States at the end of the twentieth century. And a papal encyclical celebrating the centenary of that tradition seemed to look to the United States as a kind of laboratory testing the future prospects of human freedom and solidarity. As the metaphysician Yogi Berra said on being told that a Jew had been elected mayor of Dublin, "Only in America." Yogi would not mind if a Catholic theologian were to add, "Or in Rome."

The America in which this has happened is the America that is, was, and will ever be an *experiment*, a never-to-be-completed exercise in determining whether a nation "so conceived and so dedicated" can long endure: can endure in liberty and remain dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. That, as John Courtney Murray liked to put it, is the "American proposition." The testing of that proposition is the country's story line. So the unfinished quality of the American experiment is not an accident. It is of the essence of this "nation with the soul of a church," as Chesterton famously described us.

The test inherent in the American proposition can never be passed once-for-all. For the continuity of America is not the continuity of race, tribe, or ethnic group—the continuity of blood, if you will. Rather it inheres in the continuous process of testing our society against those defining public norms whose acceptance *as* defining norms constitutes one as an "American." In other words, American continuity is the continuity of *conviction*: the conviction that we can, in fact, through this *novus ordo seclorum* called American constitutional democracy, "form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

The concept of America-as-experiment has a long, distinguished, and ecumenical pedigree. In contemporary usage it is most frequently drawn from the works of Father Murray; but Murray himself happily acknowledged that he had taken the concept from Lincoln, who in turn drew on a stream of national self-understanding that reached an early rhetorical apogee in John Winthrop's sermon ("A Modell of Christian Charity") aboard

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the *Arbella* in 1630. Thus, America is *intrinsically* a nation locked into an ongoing, public moral argument about the right-ordering of our lives, loves, and loyalties. And, perhaps to the surprise of some, modern Catholic social teaching now occupies an important role in that debate.

Ours is, at best, the second generation in which one could make that assertion without causing a (decidedly unecumenical) donnybrook. Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. was not exaggerating by much when he told the doyen of American Catholic historical studies, John Tracy Ellis, that "the prejudice against your Church [is] the deepest bias in the history of the American people." And if American anti-Catholicism or, to be more precise, American anti-*public*-Catholicism now wears a predominantly secular, rather than Protestant, mask, it is nonetheless real, and nonetheless a factor in the continuing argument about the right-ordering of our society.

Still, Christian social ethics in these United States has become a thoroughly ecumenical affair into which many streams of reflection—Calvinist, Lutheran, Wesleyan, Anabaptist, and Roman Catholic—now flow. This vindicates not only one dimension of the modern ecumenical movement but the claims of the Founders and Framers, James Madison prominent among them, who believed that religious liberty would be (and should be) good for religion and good for the American polity. It also vindicates the hopes of such giants of American Catholic history as Archbishop John Carroll and Cardinal James Gibbons: proto-ecumenists, social reformers, and American patriots who looked forward with calm confidence to the day when American Christians would deliberate in common, and as a matter of course, on their responsibilities as believers and as citizens.

In his commencement address at Yale in 1962 (a speech best remembered today for his quip that he now had "the best of both worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale [honorary] degree"), President John F. Kennedy honed the ethos of the "best and the brightest" to a particularly sharp edge by arguing that the real problems of the age were not philosophical or ideological (and thus laden with questions of meaning and value) but rather technical and managerial.

It seems, in retrospect, an extraordinary claim. For since that spring day in New Haven, civil rights, the Vietnam war, Watergate, the place of human rights concerns in U.S. foreign policy, nuclear deterrence, the roles of men and women in society, biomedical technology, the nature of the market economy, abortion, and the war in the Persian Gulf have all been debated throughout our society, passionately if not always wisely, in explicitly moral categories. (Nor has Kennedy's positivist projection been any more borne out in world affairs. The Islamic revolution of the late 1970s, the democratic revolution in Latin America, and the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe were all massive eruptions on the world-historical scene that had little or nothing to do with the technical-managerial ethos, and a great deal to do with questions of meaning and value.)

Indeed, in contemporary America, the phrase in the Pledge of Allegiance, "one nation, *under God*" (which means, first of all, "under judgment"), continues to have impressive, and in some instances even determinative, culture-shaping force. Theoretically, one could construct a moral *Weltanschauung* capable of sustaining a democratic experiment without reference to the biblical God. But that abstract possibility (which has yet to prove itself in any concrete historical circumstance) is almost completely irrelevant to American culture and society, where 85 to 95 percent of our people profess to believe that morality is derived from religion. Which means, for the overwhelming majority of the overwhelming majority, biblical religion.

In other words, Americans will for the foreseeable future continue to deploy religiously derived moral warrants in the debate over America. That is who we are.

This openness to religiously grounded moral argument is one reason why modern Catholic social teaching, which is arguably the "thickest" body of Christian social-ethical reflection available today, will be "in play" in the American argument. There are, in addition, three other characteristics of modern Catholic social teaching that make it a particularly apt resource for our ongoing debate.

First, modern Catholic social teaching is a self-consciously *public* tradition in terms of its audience and in terms of the warrants it deploys in defense of its moral arguments and its proposals for the right-ordering of society.

As a matter of chronological fact, it was only with *Pacem in Terris* (1963) that the tradition explicitly made the moral reflection of "all men of good will" its concern. But the very range of the social, political, and economic questions analyzed by modern Catholic social teaching, and the fact that those issues are addressed in the context of a modernity (and postmodernity) that is self-evidently pluralistic in its philosophical and theological convictions, makes it clear that the tradition has always been interested in engaging interlocutors beyond the formal boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church.

The public character of the tradition's audience is complemented by the public and inclusive character of the warrants the tradition has tended to use in support of its moral vision and its proposals for social, economic, and political reform, within and among nations. Catholic social teach-

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ing, while under Pope John Paul II more richly biblical in its language and imagery, has in the main been an exercise in a natural law style of moral discourse, one in which appeals to the reason of "all men of good will" are more frequently deployed than are scriptural texts.

That may seem, on the surface, a problem in the American context, given what was just said about the biblically derived moral warrants that the majority of Americans use in thinking about our life together. Yet what appears a problem may in fact be an opportunity. For there is no agreement in the American public square, and even among Christians resident therein, on an appropriate exegesis of scriptural texts relative to questions of public policy. Nor is there agreement among Christians and Jews (or within the Jewish community) on the appropriate contemporary application of the Noahide laws. And then, of course, there is the question of the secularists, who have a constitutionally protected place in the public moral argument about the meaning of the American experiment.

In this luxuriantly various cultural-linguistic jungle, the natural law approach exemplified in modern Catholic social teaching provides a useful grammar for the debate, a way of bringing some order into the pluralism of American public life such that real argument can replace cacophony. Its specific policy implications aside, therefore, the *style* of modern Catholic social teaching has a particular kind of value to a country in which public moral argument is at once both dominantly religious and determinedly pluralistic.

Second, modern Catholic social teaching is a self-consciously transcultural and transhistorical tradition. America may well be, as Ben Wattenberg suggests, the "first universal nation." But there are also tendencies toward provincialism and antinomianism in American culture that militate against the public moral debate being as wisely engaged as it might otherwise be. "Provincialism" and "antinomianism" are not terms intended as a put-down of the "average American." On the contrary: they are characteristics of the nation's intellectual and cultural elite, which often identifies its (libertine) life-style frettings and causes with the concerns of the entire world, and which has worked assiduously for some two generations now to deconstruct (or, at the very least, to marginalize) the notion that public moral argument ought to be conducted against the horizon of a set of moral norms that are taken to be authoritative for the debate. Indeed, the very notion of "authoritative norms" is regarded as impossibly *déclassé* and hopelessly "premodern" by many of the nation's intellectual and cultural tastemakers.

Confronting this elite orthodoxy, modern Catholic social thought is resolutely countercultural. It deliberately attempts to address a multiplicity of contemporary concerns, across the full range of social, economic, and political life, out of the same classic font of moral wisdom. And it continues to insist that the basic truths about the human person, human society, and human destiny that shape its social analysis are not historically contingent but, on the contrary, radically transhistorical. Indeed, insofar as this teaching operates against, and toward, an eschatological horizon of human transformation and redemption—a horizon that it nonetheless insists has a transformative power in the here-and-now—one might say that in it the elite relativizers are themselves properly relativized.

And finally, modern Catholic social thought is an important partner in the American debate about America because of the two thematic poles between which its intellectual current flows: the themes frequently identified by John Paul II as "freedom" and "solidarity."

These themes have an abiding importance for a democratic experiment in which school children pledge themselves, daily, to the pursuit of "liberty and justice for all." But they also have a special contemporary edge. Think, for example, of the great issues that now occupy such a considerable place on the domestic policy agenda: abortion; the urban underclass; the drug crisis; the availability and cost of medical care; the failures of our educational institutions; the politicizing of the academy. In each of these cases, what is being debated is the means by which, in the right-ordering of our common life, we link the liberty that is the birthright of each individual to the "justice for all" that is the promise of the American experiment. Modern Catholic social thought, in its reflection on the intrinsic (i.e., not merely accidental) relationship between human freedom and human solidarity, might just have a role to play in shaping our democratic deliberation on these urgent issues.

The same is true in international affairs. In the aftermath of the Gulf War and with the collapse of the Yalta imperial system, we shall soon be engaged in the most serious debate between internationalists and isolationists (or, as they would prefer, "new nationalists") that the country has experienced since the late 1930s. It is by no means a settled question that the American republic will accept the burdens of international leadership in a unipolar world. (Nor is there agreement, even among the committed internationalists, on what the nature, extent, costs, and means of exercising that leadership might be.) Might not modern Catholic social teaching, in its reflection on freedom and solidarity, help us sort through the questions engaged at the intersection of America's domestic responsibilities and America's duties beyond borders—especially given the propensity of the

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American people (most recently demonstrated in the debate over U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf) to conduct the argument over America's role in world affairs in explicitly moral terms?

Without running the risk of denominational special pleading, then, one can say that modern Catholic social thought brings a number of impressive strengths to the debate over America. Unlike those traditions that require explicitly confessional entry tickets to the debate, Catholic social teaching in the modern world asks only (only!) that its interlocutors be reasonable men and women of good will. One can thus engage on the terrain sketched by modern Catholic social thought without being a Catholic or, for the most part, even a believer. At the same time, the "grammar" of Catholic social teaching inevitably drives issues of policy, and the fundamental questions about the human person that do in fact structure those issues, toward transcendent reference points. Given both the abiding religiosity of our people and the constitutional doctrine of ecclesiastical nonestablishment, this is a great advantage.

Moreover, the universal character of the Catholic magisterium is also an advantage, for it provides a barrier precisely against the various forms of provincialism—cultural, ideological, ethnic, and so forth—that can hinder the debate. Because the tradition of modern Catholic social teaching understands itself to be both coherent and authoritative, it is able to offer stable points of reference for ordering public moral argument in the face of the tremendous pace of modern technological, social, and political change. One need not accept the authority of those points of reference to be grateful for the kind of terrain-mapping that the tradition's coherence provides.

But what about the often-heard charge that modern Catholic social teaching "doesn't take America seriously enough"?

In approaching this question, we must begin with a caution: "Taking America seriously" should not be taken to require that American democracy become, in virtually all respects, a model for the internal life of the Church. The proposal that it should comes from what might be termed the "party of dissent" in American Catholicism. It is a party uncomfortable, in what it imagines to be a distinctively American way, with the hierarchical character of the Church. It is a party that tends to identify "authority" with authoritarianism: behind Joseph Ratzinger it espies the spectre of Alfredo Ottaviani, and behind John Paul II, the ghost of Pius IX (or Pius X). It lays claim to the tradition of American populism (although it is a party dominated by elites), and identifies that populism with the *sensus fidelium* as defended by, say, John Henry Newman. It is a party that has taken modern Catholic social teaching seriously, although it tends to give that tradition a decidedly *gauchiste* interpretation: among other things, it highlights those dimensions of modern Catholic social teaching that it believes to be most critical of American capitalism.

It is, in short, the party of what I have elsewhere termed "Catholic Congregationalism." It has a distinctive interpretation of the history of Catholicism in America. But in the present context its most salient claim is that the teaching of John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) on the right-ordering of nations should be applied to the life of the Church itself: "dictatorial and authoritarian" forms of governance should be replaced by "democratic and participatory" ones.

There are a number of difficulties with this position. At the very least, it has a certain rhetorical implausibility about it, what one might even term self-referential inconsistency: those who urge the "Americanization" of Catholicism are often those who have the least good to say about America—as a society, a culture, or a polity.

At a more substantive level, the "Americanization" of Catholicism, were it to follow the path of liberal Protestantism—as the party of dissent seems to wish—would quite likely result in a further dissipation of Christian social witness in the United States. For there seems to be an iron law of ecclesiastical bureaucracy in American Christianity which dictates that the quest for public policy "relevance" inevitably involves the radical marginalization of the Church as a moral mentor to the wider society. No thoughtful observer can have watched the bizarre performance of the National Council of Churches on the matter of the quincentenary of the European discovery of the Americas and on the issue of the Gulf War without being at least minimally concerned that the "Americanization" of Roman Catholicism in the United States on the NCC social-action model might someday drive the Catholic Church down the sorry path described by a former NCC general secretary as the road from the mainline to the oldline to the sideline.

There is also a kind of provincialism, bordering at times on hubris, in the party of dissent's understanding of those elements of the American experience that ought to be normative for the contemporary evolution of both the Church and the world. One thinks here, in particular, of American feminism, a key plank in the platform of Catholic Congregationalism. To be sure, there are many feminisms. And on this question of women and men, there is certainly an ongoing debate to be engaged: one might even speculate that it is likely to be far more complex, in its argumentation and its outcomes, than is assumed by either Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza or Phyllis Schlafly. Be that as it may, however, it is cultural imperialism

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of the worst sort to suggest that the relations between women and men in the United States, or between some women and some men, are somehow a normative model for everybody else in the world (or, less grandly, for the Church throughout the world). And yet that would seem to be precisely the kind of claim being pressed by many feminists in the Catholic Congregationalist camp.

At bottom, though, the chief difficulty posed by Catholic Congregationalism and its concept of "taking America seriously" is not to be construed in standard left/right political terms. Rather, the principal difficulties here are theological, and specifically ecclesiological.

Calls for "taking America seriously" that confuse the deliberative processes and structures of governance appropriate to a political community with the deliberative processes and structures of governance appropriate to the community of faith involve a category error of considerable proportions. The Church is the Church. It is, in Avery Dulles' image, a community of disciples gathered together by Word and sacrament. It is a community whose service to the human family is, in the words of the Hartford Appeal, "against the world for the world." It is a community whose fundamental *raison d'être* is the proclamation of the Truth that makes men free (John 8:32)—a Truth whose contemporary meaning is not determined by the votes of "50 percent plus one," but through a complex process of discernment, reflection, debate, and prayer within boundaries established by ancient and authoritative texts and monitored by an authoritative magisterium. It is a community whose membership transcends the boundaries of human mortality, a community in which Chesterton's *mot* about tradition as the "democracy of the dead" is a crucial determinant of self-understanding.

Viewed through the lens of American voluntarism, or through the preoccupations of Catholic Congregationalism, this "thick" ecclesiology can often seem to be little more than a matter of institutional prickliness. No doubt there have been times when the boundary-setting function of the magisterium has prematurely foreclosed needed discussion. No doubt there are, in some Catholic quarters, problems of "creeping infallibilism." But at bottom, the ecclesiological "thickness" of Roman Catholicism is not a matter of institutional self-interest; it is a matter of communal self-understanding, as has been authoritatively determined for the contemporary discussion by the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

Moreover, the "thick" ecclesiology of Roman Catholicism should be of interest far beyond the formal boundaries of the Catholic Church. For it is precisely by being the Church—by being the bearer of an authoritative set of reference points for the public argument about the right-ordering of society—that the Church makes its most distinctive contribution to the ongoing democratic deliberation about how it is that we shall live together in these United States. Absent that sense of obligation to the authoritative self-understanding of the community—absent that sense of Church *as Church*—"Catholic social teaching" would quickly dissolve, as other forms of Christian social teaching have dissolved, into an ecclesiastically tinged manifestation of the changing enthusiasms of what the British, with malicious wit, refer to as the "chattering classes." Catholic Congregationalism, in short, is most unlikely to provide persuasive answers to the question of how it is that we are to be Christian in America today—precisely because of its ecclesiological thinness.

On the other hand, ecclesiological orthodoxy does not require us to think that the future development of Catholic social teaching could not be significantly enhanced by "taking America *more* seriously" than Church tradition has heretofore done, and taking it more seriously precisely as a morally grounded social, cultural, and political experiment in democratic pluralism.

When the seminal 1986 Vatican "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" teaches that "the call to freedom rang out with full force" only in 1789 with the coming of the French Revolution, and laments the further oppression that often accompanied man's subsequent efforts at worldly liberation, the American Catholic wants to ask, with respect but also with candor, what about the Revolution of 1776? What about American constitutionalism, which for all its manifold failings has yet managed to channel the revolutionary energies of our people into nonviolent forms of social change? What about a revolutionary tradition whose inheritors continue to declare, publicly, and at the end of the twentieth century, "In God we trust"?

The "gap" that some have perceived between the American experience and the evolution of modern Catholic social teaching is explained in part by the European or Continental character of the theological evolution that undergirded that teaching from the days of von Ketteler and Leo XIII until recent years. That Continental debate continues to shape the magisterium's development of social teaching, as do themes drawn from the contemporary Latin American experiences of Catholicism. But it is surely long past time for the responsible authorities in the Church to see in the American Catholic debate—and particularly as that debate reflects on the distinctive experience of modernity in the United States—as formidable a body of thought on these matters as may be found in any part of world Catholicism.

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Indeed, I will make so bold as to suggest that the cutting edge of contemporary Catholic social theory—on matters of political structures, economics, and international affairs—is here in the United States. Much of this work is being done by theologians, philosophers, political theorists, and economists who self-consciously wish to hold themselves accountable to the boundary-setting function of the magisterium—which should only make the possibility of a greater American contribution to the future of Catholic social teaching more attractive.

The United States is, for better and for worse, and usually for both, the world's great laboratory for the future—and has been so since the mid-nineteenth century. The radical character of America's ethnic, religious, and racial pluralism (itself a microcosm of the human family as it struggles to make the transition from anarchy to political community), and America's indisputable position as the communications center of the world, should suggest the importance for modern Catholic social thought of "taking America more seriously." A particular subject about which the American experience should be of interest to Catholic thought and teaching is the worldwide struggle for religious freedom and human rights.

That religious freedom is the first of human rights, and an essential guarantor of right-order within nations, is a persistent theme in the social teaching of John Paul II that resonates deeply with the Catholic experience of America. Indeed, it is on this question of religious freedom, in both its personal and public aspects, that the tradition of modern Catholic social thought has been most directly influenced by the American experiment. That the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) was decisively shaped by John Courtney Murray's creative extension of Catholic church/state theory—a development of social doctrine that was generated at least in part by the *novus ordo* of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—is a well-known story. What is perhaps less well-recognized is the extraordinary impact that the Council's teaching on religious freedom has had on the affairs of men and nations.

Permit me here to make a simple, flat assertion: the transformation of the Catholic Church from a traditional defender of the *ancien régime* into perhaps the world's foremost institutional defender of basic human rights—a transformation whose real-world impacts have been felt throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and from Seoul to Tierra del Fuego—was inconceivable without the Declaration on Religious Freedom, the American-influenced *magna charta* of the Catholic human rights revolution.

The future direction of the Catholic human rights revolution is not altogether clear. That is due, at least in part, to confusions that entered the Catholic human rights debate with *Pacem in Terris*: specifically, the listing of a vast range of human and societal goods under the rubric of "human rights." The economic, social, and political failures of those societies that proclaimed their fidelity to the priority of "economic and social rights" has become evident to all but the most hardened ideologues, as has the superior performance of societies that have stressed the priority of civil liberties and political freedoms in the ordering of societies. Now, in the wake of the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, and under the pressure of yet-unresolved questions being persistently pushed by some influential sectors of Western opinion, the topic has shifted to the question of the *location* of human rights, and specifically to the issue of whether there are such things as "minority rights" or "group rights" within pluralistic societies. This may still seem a bit esoteric in the United States, though, alas, less and less so. In any case, it is a positively burning question in Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed in Canada. And as if that were not enough trouble for one season, it has become painfully clear that there is much work to be done in the new democracies in terms of implementing the full promise of religious freedom and in defining the relationship between governmental and ecclesiastical institutions, as the recent debate over religious instruction in Polish schools has demonstrated.

No claims should be made about American omniscience on either of these two points: the locus of "rights" in persons or groups, and the constitutional jurisprudence of religious freedom. On the other hand, in no other modern setting has religious freedom been so supportive of a vibrant religious *practice*, which has in turn secured the very cultural foundations of democracy, as in these United States. Moreover, the vigorous debate on the dimensions of a Catholic theory of human rights conducted by American Catholic theologians of various philosophical and political persuasions—the names Michael Novak, Mary Ann Glendon, and David Hollenbach come immediately to mind—has often been of a very high caliber, and ought surely to have a role in shaping the future reflection of the Church's formal teaching authority on these matters. Here, then, on this matter of religious freedom and the Catholic human rights revolution, is a natural candidate for inclusion under the rubric of "taking America more seriously."

There are other candidates for inclusion that come readily to mind—e.g., the American experience of democratic capitalism as a moral-cultural model for economic development, or the leadership responsibilities of the West in general and America in

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particular in pursuit of a new world order—but their adequate elaboration would require more space than is here available.

But it is clear in any case that the future development of modern Catholic social teaching will be strengthened if, in addition to its many other conversation partners on this vastly diverse planet, the magisterium of the Church continues to take the American experiment seriously as one paradigm for discerning the problems and possibilities of human freedom. Conversely, the future of the American experiment will be more secure if John Paul II's teaching on the inherently moral nature of human freedom is more regularly reflected in our public discourse.

In 1884, the Catholic bishops of the United States were bold enough to claim that "our country's heroes were the instruments of the God of nations in establishing this home of freedom." We may prefer a more modest reading of the workings of Providence in history. But not too modest, I hope. In the renewal of the American experiment, and in the further development of modern Catholic social teaching, it is not to be regarded as merely an accident of chronology that the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter and Washington's (real) Birthday both fall on February 22. FT

Repent Ye!

Jesus is coming repent Ye!
reads the scrawled sign
of this man who is not John the Baptist
but who is in his own way
the handwriting on the wall
of this grim time.
Repent of what?
the tired commuters ask,
their virtue in their briefcases
as they head towards Grand Central
and the long ride
to what is no longer home
but still has no other name.
Repent, they ask, of what wildness,
what archaic evil;
and the man himself who holds the sign
does not know and could not say.
But over the gates of the terminal
lush nymphs sway
locked around the clock
restraining it from dominating
the universe;
and they know what Jesus knew
that what is to be repented
is what is lost:
the child unconceived,
the moment
when the hands that might have touched
pulled back,
the bread
that was swallowed in haste and alone,
and the wine
untasted on the table of the life
unlived.

Elizabeth Duran

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Natural Law and the Law: An Exchange

The March issue of First Things *featured an essay by Robert H. Bork, "Natural Law and the Constitution." In that essay, Judge Bork responded to criticisms of his views on the topic by Hadley Arkes, Russell Hittinger, and William Bentley Ball. Because of the significance of the subject, the Editors decided to extend the discussion by inviting Messrs. Arkes, Hittinger, and Ball to respond to Mr. Bork's response to them and, finally, by allowing Mr. Bork a (for now) concluding reply to his critics.*

Hadley Arkes

In his generous nature, Robert Bork was willing to bring out the threads that connect us, even though he has borne serious reservations about the kind of argument that runs through my book, *Beyond the Constitution*. As ever, he has shown an uncommon willingness to think anew about his own arguments, and for my own part, I will reflect again about the points of his reluctance to join my argument. He reveals, in his piece, points of substantial disagreement, and they may be the subject of a conversation carried on with more profit over the years, because it may be carried on as a conversation among friends. But in the aftermath of his commentary, it is worth considering briefly some of the issues that linger in the center of the debate and that touch the concerns of this journal.

As Robert Bork knows, every exponent of natural law, from Aquinas to Abraham Lincoln, understood the necessity of having "positive law." We might have a sense, for example, of the principle that would justify the protection of life from reckless endangerment. When that principle is applied to our highways, it needs to be expressed in regulations of "positive law" that bear on the conditions of our lives. And so the law may impose a speed limit of 55 m.p.h., or it may prescribe "breathalyzer" tests, along with roadblocks, to check on the sobriety of drivers. Natural law would provide the principle that justifies measures of this kind, but natural law would not require any one of these measures to the exclusion of others. And that is why a generation of jurists schooled in natural law found it easier to follow a regimen of judicial restraint: when judges understood more clearly the difference between natural law and positive law, they understood more readily that the mission of judges would not encompass the management of the schools or the allocation of public housing.

The proponents of natural law, then, understood the need for positive law, but that did not make them "positivists" in the current understanding. The lawyers and jurists who have earned that title are the people who have argued that there are no standards of moral judgment apart from the standards that are "posited," or set down, in the law. Hence Chief Justice Rehnquist, who has written that the "value judgments" of individuals "take on a form of moral goodness *because* they have been enacted into positive law. *It is the fact of their enactment that gives them whatever moral claim they have upon us as a society*" (emphasis added).

Judge Bork has sought to put a benign haze over this matter, but it is easily dissolved: any moral principle that does not *bind* is not a moral principle. If there are no binding propositions on right and wrong apart from the law, then there is no morality outside the positive law. And if a positive law is made only through the stipulations of a local

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majority, then there is no right or wrong apart from the preferences of a local majority. We may be talking now about some of our friends, but the fact is that anyone who satisfies this strict understanding of a "positivist" has amply satisfied the requirements of a "cultural relativist." He may affect a respect for something he calls "moral principles," but he has committed himself to a view that acknowledges no moral truth apart from the opinions of right and wrong that are dominant in any country (i.e., the opinions that are held by a majority).

That is a position that Robert Bork came near to incorporating many years ago. "Truth," he once said, "is what the majority thinks it is at any given moment precisely because the majority is permitted to govern and to redefine its values constantly." If he has strained to persuade his friends that he is not a moral skeptic, it may be because they remember lines of that kind. Nor is it exactly settling when he seeks to make a confirming gesture about moral truth and he can deliver himself only of this sentiment: that "it seems impossible to live any sort of decent life without *ideas* about moral truth" (emphasis added). That merely tells us, of course, that there is utility in having these ideas, not that the ideas are true. But his inclination has been to move steadily away from skepticism, and he has even endorsed the notion that, in interpreting the Bill of Rights and other parts of the Constitution, it will often be necessary to trace our judgments back to "the structure of moral understanding that must lie behind the text of the Constitution."

Still, that moral understanding seems a bit cloudy to him, and he admits a critical doubt about the "source" and "content" of natural law. "For some," he says, "it is ordained by God; for others, it arises from the nature of human beings, even if we are evolutionary accidents." But here he has preserved a venerable confusion that the exponents of natural law dispelled long ago. As "the judicious" Richard Hooker explained quite clearly in 1593, the law that comes to us through revelation is the divine law. But the natural law is the law that is accessible to us simply through the reason that marks the nature of human beings: "Law rational therefore, which men commonly use to call the law of nature, meaning thereby the law which human nature knoweth itself in reason universally bound unto, which also for that cause may be termed most fitly the law of reason."

Natural law began, then, with that very nature of human beings that creates the possibilities of law: namely, that human beings are the only beings who can give reasons over matters of right and wrong. That was the understanding of Aristotle and the American Founders; but in an interesting slip, that was not part of Bork's account of human "nature." We may be, as he says, "evolutionary accidents," but the founders of law noted, in the first instance, that this primate conjugated verbs and framed justifications.

Hooker understood that the natural law began with those "laws of reason" that were accessible to creatures gifted with reason. Our first generation of jurists in this country understood that they were "doing" natural law when they wove those laws of reason through their judicial opinions. Those axioms of the law seemed so self-evident and compelling that we could often forget that we were in the presence of the first principles of law. Bork himself has applied those axioms of reasoning acutely in his own writings but without the sense that he has been speaking the language of natural law. And yet he has complained that "a natural law judge would make positive laws out of his own perception of universal moral principles. Those moral postulates would then become just as binding on the polity as the written law of the Constitution. That is where we legal positivists get off."

But when the Founders—and Bork—invoked the axioms of reason, there was no sense that the truth of these propositions depended merely on "perceptions." Consider: Justice Story often cited the maxim that what may not be done directly may not be done indirectly. If it is wrong to commit a murder, it is wrong also to hire or incite another party to perform the same killing. If the federal government cannot reach a subject directly, it may not use the taxing power as surrogate, and legislate through the guise of taxing. Chief Justice Marshall offered this dictum in *Cohens v. Virginia* (1821): "The judicial power of every well constituted government must be co-extensive with the legislative, and must be capable of deciding every judicial question which grows out of the constitution and laws." Corollary: any question or subject that may come, properly, within the authority of the courts must come properly within the jurisdiction of the legislature. How could it be then that the Congress is not empowered to legislate on the subject of abortion when the federal courts claim the competence to reach that subject in all of its dimensions?

These implications are scarcely trivial, and yet they flow from propositions that have a "necessary" force of axioms in the law. Marshall and Story did not see these axioms as depending in any way on their own "perceptions." They understood, rather, that the axioms were part of the "principles of law" and the discipline of judging. And for that reason, it could hardly be a question for them—as it is for Bork—of whether these axioms were "as binding on the polity as the written law of the Constitution": these axioms were utterly necessary to the coherence of the law, and any part of the law that ran counter to them simply could not have coherence as a proposition and the standing of "law." If they were

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axioms, they would be necessary and binding, regardless of whether they had been set down in the Constitution. A lawyer recently arguing before the Supreme Court made the common mistake of claiming a right, "under the Constitution," to a presumption of innocence. Every schoolboy apparently knows that defendants should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. And yet nowhere in the Constitution is that proposition set down. What is the ground, then, on which we have come to treat it as a principle of our law? Could it have something to do with the fact that any contrary proposition becomes untenable?

When an earlier generation of jurists noted these axioms or drew out their corollaries, they did not have the sense that they were creating "new constitutional principles." They saw themselves, rather, as drawing out the implications that arose from the axioms of law. Bork himself, as a writer and a judge, has engaged in the same exercise with considerable effect, and on this head, there is no example more telling than the argument he has advanced as his central teaching: namely, that positive law must take precedence over natural law. Natural law may indeed offer a collection of lofty thoughts, but the principles of natural law would not be binding in our law unless they are formally incorporated through the positive law. This understanding is put forward as a rule of construction—but more than that, as a premise that anchors his jurisprudence. And yet, that premise is nowhere to be found in the text of the Constitution. On what basis, then, would it claim our credence as a rule to be followed in our law—and indeed, on what basis would we even claim to know that it is true?

Robert Bork is evidently persuaded that this understanding appeals to a sense of the fitness of things or perhaps even to the "logic of law." But either way, he would be appealing to a principle of reasoning that would not depend for its truth on whether it happened to be mentioned in the Constitution. In other words, we would be back to the axioms of the law: we would have discovered, yet again, the principles of natural law.

It is a curious question as to why Bork has adopted the premises of his adversaries: why does he assume that, if we speak seriously about natural law, we must be assigning more power to the judges? My own book was directed as much to legislators and executives, who also bear a responsibility to deliberate on the constitutionality of their own acts. But Bork has been disposed to support the claim of the judges to act as the sole interpreters of the Constitution. And he has resisted the understanding held by Lincoln that the political branches may work through ordinary legislation to limit and even reverse the decisions of the courts. The defenders of natural law have not sought to protect, in that way, the power of courts. But it does not appear quite yet that Bork has made the connection: the proponents of natural law have been drawn to him precisely because he has supported in his teaching a discipline of restraint for judges.

Robert Bork, as a jurist, was the most sensible and disciplined of judges. I remarked to him once that he is very much a child of the University of Chicago, and he has spoken the language of natural justice all his life. And that is another reason why his absence from the Supreme Court has been a grievous loss. If he were there, we would now have on that tribunal two judges who have brooded at length over natural law: one who has proclaimed his dedication to it, while professing that it has only the faintest bearing on the cases before him; and another who has practiced natural law even while professing with a proper diffidence that it cannot be done.

And yet, there is one reflex that continues to run counter to this pattern. Bork expressed his dubiety about the argument made by Justice Harlan that the segregation of the races might be challenged under that clause in the Constitution which guarantees to each State "a republican form of government." He found it "difficult to understand why the same moral reasoning would not have enabled the pre-Civil War court to end slavery." The task for the judges then would have been comparable, he thought, to the task managed by Justices Brennan and Marshall on the death penalty: *viz.*, to flex their genius in showing "that the death penalty violates the Constitution despite the fact that the document explicitly assumes that punishment's availability."

But here, Bork runs the risk of falling into the same mistake made by Chief Justice Taney in the Dred Scott case: there is no explicit endorsement of slavery in the Constitution comparable to the explicit mention of "capital" crimes and punishments. And as Bork knows, that was not an accident. The Founders made their accommodation with slavery, but they took care that the name of that hateful institution would not be imprinted in the Constitution where it could stand as a lingering embarrassment when slavery had come to an end. The silences of the Constitution in this respect were a mark of the original understanding: that slavery would be tolerated for prudential reasons, but it could never be endorsed in principle. Even Founders from the South recognized that slavery was incompatible in principle with a polity founded on the right of human beings to be governed only with their own consent. I cannot imagine that Bork should find it extravagant in any degree that a judge would acknowledge that same understanding.

What is at issue is whether judges could have taken it upon themselves to upset the political compromise on slavery that was necessary to the

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creation of the Union. Judges tutored in natural rights and committed to a "government of consent" had been quite cautious not to snatch this responsibility from the hands of officers elected by the people. A court composed of judges of that character could have helped to avert a political crisis by avoiding the mistake made by Chief Justice Taney: they would not have fallen into the error of finding that "the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution."

They would have been more alert to that point precisely because they would have understood the principles of natural right that stood behind the Constitution, and guided even its compromises. The aim of my book was to remind us of the way in which jurists and statesmen in an earlier day were able to trace their judgments back to those first principles "beyond the Constitution." Just what those principles were and how they reasoned about them forms the issue in dispute even among friends. And it is a reflection of Robert Bork, in his sense of engagement, that the question provides for him and his friends the steadiest of work.

Russell Hittinger

Judge Bork reminds us that ideology should have no place in constitutional interpretation. In Federalist #78, Alexander Hamilton maintained that the judiciary "may truly be said to have neither Force nor Will, but merely judgment. . . ." This holds not only for the institution of the judiciary, which has no immediate authority over the sword or the purse and enjoys no legislative powers, but also for the judge whose responsibility is to interpret the law, to exercise judgment rather than legislative will. Whatever the merits or demerits of a particular philosophy *about* law, the law cannot be regarded as an instrument, outcome, or implication of the judge's private theory. Here there is no significant disagreement between Judge Bork and his critics.

Moreover, no one who has carefully considered the history of the Supreme Court over the past several decades can fail to agree with Judge Bork's general admonition about the clumsy and sometimes mischievous uses of natural law theory. In the first place, whatever the state of eighteenth-century opinion on the issue, today there is no general agreement about the meaning of "natural law." In the second place, the concept is useless unless it is applied to particular disputes. While there is an impressive amount of case law influenced by one or another natural law theory, philosophically speaking, the results hardly constitute a consistent body of law. In the third place, since the late nineteenth century, judicial uses of natural law (more often than not) have been ideological. Rather than being an instrument in the service of clarifying the moral principles embedded in our law, natural law theory has been used to obscure a willful and often ignorant political or social agenda favored by the judiciary.

To my knowledge, most so-called "conservative" proponents of natural law are in agreement with Judge Bork about this problem. In reference to my article in the *Wake Forest Law Review* 429 (1990), Judge Bork neglects to point out that one of my chief points is that liberal natural law theory has been something close to an unmitigated disaster. I argue that it has proved to be neither a faithful steward of the tradition of American natural law jurisprudence, nor an articulate vehicle for defending the rule of law. Though Bork correctly cites me as saying that natural law theory is "unavoidable," I certainly never suggested that the Douglas-Brennan-Blackmun school of natural law should be regarded as an unavoidable fixture of our constitutional jurisprudence. The whole point of the article is to show precisely where it has gone wrong, how it has capitulated to ideology, and perforce why it ought to be rejected.

Curiously, Judge Bork writes as though he is on the defensive on this issue of natural law. But the truth of the matter is that *he* has set the terms of the discussion. Having issued a very powerful criticism of judicial activism, he has put natural law jurisprudence in the position of having to justify itself—at the very least in the position of having to distinguish itself from the run-amok activism of the contemporary court. As he says: "Having endured for half a century a Court that seized authority not confided to it to lay down as unalterable law a liberal social agenda nowhere to be found in the actual Constitution of the United States, conservatives must decide whether they want a Court that behaves in the same way but in the service of *their* agenda." Judge Bork's concern is intelligible and fair.

The problem is that the issue is not a tidy one. It necessarily involves analysis of historical, philosophical, and hermeneutical issues that cannot be undertaken in a careful way in a brief essay, much less in a reply to such an essay. On this score, I am not sure that Judge Bork has really tackled the strongest arguments or the most perplexing questions raised in the writings of either Professor Arkes or myself. The complex issues are flattened out and reduced to the problem of judicial review. Whatever the extent or depth of the problem of natural law, it is something more than what can be accurately encapsulated in the debate over judicial review or

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the performance of the activist Court.

Moreover, the waters of this debate are muddied because Judge Bork has not adequately, or at least not entirely, elucidated his own understanding of these matters. For example, he admits that a judge can be expected to address natural law in the course of discerning "what the framers and ratifiers meant"—a discernment, he says, that must be distinguished from making up "new rights the judge regards as 'natural.' " I agree. Although Clarence Thomas ran from the issue of natural law during the Senate hearings, he too finally agreed with the proposition that it is proper for a judge to attend to natural law theory if it is a conspicuous element in the statute or constitutional text under dispute. Indeed, for an American to rule out some conjunction between original intent and natural law would be nothing less than an ideological, if not Orwellian, rewriting of history.

In a certain sense, the entire issue rests upon what can be included in, or excluded by, this discernment about the intent of the framers and ratifiers. They had strong convictions about natural law—convictions that influenced not only their understanding of the natural principles of justice underlying the Constitution as a whole, but that also shaped their understanding of certain clauses of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and section one of the Fourteenth Amendment. Granted that the judge must never read his private theory of "nature" or "justice" into the Constitution, the question is (1) whether one is already there, and (2) whether it sets a norm for interpretation of the law.

Simply put, does Judge Bork believe that a responsible method of original intent can locate a natural law of rights or political institutions embedded in our Constitution? If so, does Judge Bork believe that this can have any bearing upon the judge's interpretation and application of the law? If the answer to these two questions is yes, then there is probably some common ground between Judge Bork and his conservative critics. Judge Bork gives indications that this common ground exists, even though his approach to natural law often appears to be exclusively devoted to debunking judicial activism, whether of the left or the right.

A judge who focuses upon the natural law intent of the framers might be a clumsy hermeneuticist; he might be a maladroit jurisprude when he tries to apply the principles to the case at hand; indeed, for lack of either philosophical or legal training, he might make a complete mess of things; but he cannot be called a judicial activist. He can only be called a judicial activist if we have already determined, ahead of the game as it were, that there is no judicially cognizable natural law theory to be found in the legal texts or in the intent of the framers. If one has reason to believe that this is so, then Judge Bork is correct when he suggests that conservative proponents of natural law are up to nothing essentially different than the liberal activists. Both would be reading a theory "into" the law. And even if one theory is better on its own merits, it would still amount to an imposition of a judge's private opinion. But if one has reason to believe that the fundamental law bespeaks *some* natural principles of justice, then the superficial symmetry between liberal and conservative activists does not necessarily follow. For what *might* distinguish these two schools is whether or not one or the other comports with the original intent of the framers and ratifiers. That, I maintain, is an important difference.

The charge of "activism" on the part of a natural lawyer cannot be anything other than polemical assertion until we settle this matter. Judge Bork sometimes appears to leave the door ajar to the possibility that one or another understanding of natural law comports with the intent of the founders (and hence the possibility of a principled distinction between sound and unsound theories and users of natural law), while at other times he seems to suggest that judicial uses of natural law theory are necessarily impositions of the judge's private worldview (and hence the distinction between sound and unsound theories has no point as to what judges do).

Granted the wide array of theoretical and practical problems that attend natural law theory as a method of constitutional interpretation, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind that it is not the only species of willful, ignorant, or ideological jurisprudence. Arguably, more mischief has been done in the name of one or another doctrine of original intent or "originalism" than under the rubric natural law. For example, three notorious and pernicious cases were due almost entirely to misguided efforts to resolve constitutional disputes via original intent.

In *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857), Justice Taney referred to the "natural" inferiority of the blacks. Yet his opinion, in his own words, sought to discern the status of the question "within the meaning of the Constitution." Taney bounced from one clause of the Constitution to another, from the privileges and immunities and diverse citizenship clauses to the Fifth Amendment; and he solemnly cited a wide array of statutes pertaining to slavery in search of legislative precedent and intent. The salient point is that he expressly rejected any moral or legal opinion that would "induce the Court to give to the words of the Constitution a more liberal construction in their favor than they were intended to bear when the instrument was framed and adopted." In ascertaining the intent of the framers, Taney avowed fidelity to the "plain words," to the

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"intent" of the framers, and styled himself as a strict constructionist.

In *Everson v. Board* (1947), Justice Black, an inveterate foe of natural law reasoning, summarily undid the principles of church-state jurisprudence that had been in place for well over a century. On the basis of what was a phantasmal history of colonial opinions on the matter, and relying upon an exegesis of a private letter in which Thomas Jefferson referred to the "wall of separation," Justice Black construed the Establishment Clause to mean that government is prohibited from aiding and promoting religion. The Court's jurisprudence of the Establishment Clause has been in disrepair ever since.

And regarding *Roe v. Wade* (1973), we can agree with Judge Bork that Justice Blackmun sought to augment and expand an alleged natural right to privacy that covers a unilateral decision to procure an abortion. But we can also point out that the case pivoted upon Justice Blackmun's survey of the history of statutory law, common law, and constitutional case law. For it was his assessment of these that led him to claim that the fetus does not enjoy rights to be balanced against those of the mother. Laws against abortion were only intended, he argued, to protect the health of the woman. While Blackmun's exegesis of the legislative and constitutional history was as superficial as Taney's in *Dred Scott*, we should not fail to see that the opinion was based upon a misguided method of original intent, not natural law.

The rhetorical and dialectical point I want to make is that it makes no more sense to jettison a method of original intent because it has been used with disastrous results than it is to throw out natural law because frequently it has been a foil for ideological jurisprudence. Willful and ideologically disposed judges are just as liable to tell false stories regarding original intent as they are to concoct false theories about human nature. I myself no more trust Justice Black's historical imagination than I trust Justice Brennan's philosophical understanding of natural law. But banishing historical imagination and moral philosophy from judicial interpretation of the law is no solution to the problem of remedying the errors they make.

There is no other (scholarly) way to respond to willful, ignorant, and ideological uses of a method than carefully and patiently to distinguish between its sound and unsound formulations, and between its responsible and irresponsible uses. One can agree that the theoretical tool of natural law is problematic; one can even agree that in the climate of today's legal culture it is especially apt to be used in a way that causes more harm that good. But it is quite another thing to set up an uncompromising either-or between fidelity to original intent and judicial respect for natural principles of justice. I don't buy this either-or proposition. It is too easy, and is itself prone to ideological distortion. Rather than reading theories "into" the Constitution, it can read theories "out." A judge has no more authority to do the one than the other.

Finally, I should say that I have never said that Judge Bork is himself a "moral skeptic" or relativist—only that his judicial philosophy too quickly and completely rules out natural law. I believe he was a first-rate judge and remains a timely and effective critic of judicial activism. Although I think that his formulation of what is at stake in natural law theory is one-sided, I for one am indebted to what he has had to say on these matters.

William Bentley Ball

Judge Bork's essay says much that is important and appealing. Once again, it is fun to see him taking swings at the liberal-left (and connecting). And it is refreshing to read a legal positivist who, unlike so many of that persuasion, is open and upfront with his convictions. He takes exception to my article in the June 1990 *Crisis*. I think it useful for FIRST THINGS' readers that, first, I discuss the genesis of that article.

I had tried a case in Wisconsin in which I sought to prevent the jailing of Amish parents and the governmental obliteration of their religious way of life. I argued (in trial court and ultimately before the Supreme Court [*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972]) that the state's criminal prosecution of these people for refusing, on religious grounds, to enroll their children in public high schools violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. The Supreme Court agreed. That federal clause had long been held by the Court to be applicable to the states through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court's reasoning was that "due process" is a term embracing "substantive," as opposed to merely "procedural," rights. "Substantive," the Court said, describes rights "so rooted in the traditions and conscience of our people as to be ranked as fundamental." The free exercise of religion, said the Court, is one such right. Going back to medieval times, English courts had recognized a power in judges to go beyond the letter of the law "where equity fulfills its spirit, which is justice." The American Constitution did not disturb this natural law principle.

Judge Bork blasted the *Yoder* decision on two grounds: (1) that the Court's upholding of the

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Amish really constituted an "establishment" of their religion, and (2) that its resort to the "due process" (natural law) foundation for its ruling was in error. In *Crisis*, I took on Bork in reference to both points, but I now see that I had better take up the second again.

Contrary to Bork's charge, I have not engaged in any proposal that "the Court should strike down, on the basis of natural law, statutes that contravene nothing in the Constitution." In *Yoder*, I urged courts to strike down a statute precisely because, as applied to the Amish, it did contravene the Constitution. In dozens of cases in twenty-two states, I have contended against statutes which, because they violate fundamental liberties or natural rights, violate due process. Bork's hang-up with me on this point arises from his view that "due process of law," as given in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, refers solely to guarantees of fair procedure. As Bork well illustrates in *The Tempting of America*, this conception has been consistently rejected (he would say "violated") by the Court. Back in 1819, the Court said that the source of our "due process" concept was the Magna Charta, a declaration of rights indeed not limited to procedural rights. But it is important to see what is implied in limiting due process to "fair procedures."

Suppose that, in response to population-control pressure groups, Maryland (and Maryland would be just the state to do it) enacts a statute requiring the aborting of a third child born of any low-income woman who already has two. Nothing in the black print of the Maryland and federal constitutions *except* their due process clauses protects such a woman's liberty to give birth or the right to life of the unborn child. The "right to life, liberty, and property" phrasing is found solely in those clauses. But those are substantive, or natural, rights, and Bork says that such rights are not protected by those clauses.

Procedural rights are indeed important, and Bork will allow (nay, insist) that the Maryland lady have procedural due process. So she will be entitled to the right papers, various forms of notice, with adequate numbers of copies in due form, a hearing, etc. But that is all she will take from the due process clauses. After such procedures are properly carried out, the abortion procedure will also be. The day-to-day keepers of due process, in this view, are the court clerks and the process servers. Of course, this woman, in the Bork view, can try to get the state or federal constitutions suitably amended or get a protective statute enacted. And while she raises funds to that end, organizes a PAC, and establishes a political force to effect change, women like her will keep getting aborted.

I am sure Judge Bork will call that a bizarre example of his principle, but example of his principle it truly is. He himself has supplied another that is equally hair-raising. In 1927, in *Buck v. Bell*, the Court upheld a Virginia statute authorizing the sterilizing of mental "defectives." The great legal positivist, Justice Holmes, remarked that in his opinion "three generations of imbeciles are enough." As to this and a related case, Bork, in *The Tempting of America*, says that "nothing in the Constitution made the state of being fertile a civil right." True enough, if judges may not resort to substantive due process.

Contrary to what Bork says, I have not expressed the belief "that judges may properly amend the Constitution with their version of natural law," or with any version of anything. (Nor, I think, have Judge Thomas, Russell Kirk, Professor Arkes, or Professor Hittinger.) That is like saying, "*Since* Catholics worship images, they disobey biblical strictures." The trick in the phrasing is the premise that they worship images. The trick in Bork's phrasing is the premise that natural rights are not protected by the Due Process Clause. The tradition is otherwise. Bork, in *The Tempting*, quotes Justice Marshall as suggesting that "the nature of society" may prescribe limits on the legislative power. That was in 1810. Bork says that Marshall adopted the idea of "principles of natural justice as a source of judicial power." This Marshall was John, not Thurgood. John was affirming natural law before Thurgood ever tried his hand at it.

Finally, we come to an important question relating to who's who. Bork says that Professor Arkes and I want the Supreme Court (and presumably all benches) to be filled with judges who share our moral views. Speaking for myself, he is exactly right. But I well realize what nags Bork. That is the fact that, for example, seven justices in *Roe v. Wade* reached out into the realm of fantasy to summon a "right of privacy" as a basis for killing people. But these were his brother legal positivists. They can scarcely be accused of having resorted to Higher Law. They resorted to what one can properly call Lower Law or Unnatural Law. I agree that, under their reading and my reading of "due process," they could do that. But the answer is not to constrict due process to procedure (thus leaving us largely at the mercy of majorities). Instead it is to labor for the seating of judges who, respectful of the legislative will, nevertheless embrace the saving concept of a transcendent order.

Robert H. Bork

It is, of course, flattering to have one's ideas about the relationship of constitutional adjudication to

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natural law taken seriously by so distinguished a trio, and it is cheering that the discussion proceeds in a civilized and thoughtful manner, which is not invariably the case in these matters. Some, though by no means all, of the differences expressed seem to spring from confusion about what I said. I must take the responsibility for that, so I will attempt, outdoing Richard Nixon, to make about a half-dozen things perfectly clear.

It sometimes feels as if Hadley Arkes and I are, in the most agreeable way, talking right past each other. Let me see if I can dispel the "benign haze" that Arkes perceives. I wrote about the duties of judges with respect to the Constitution and denied that a judge is entitled to discover and enforce natural law principles that are not found in the Constitution. When he is at work, his concern must be with positive law and positive law only. A moral principle binds, as Arkes puts it, but it binds morally. If the people have enacted an immoral law, it is the judge's duty to enforce it or resign. He may resign because he agrees, as he should, that there is "morality outside the positive law," but that morality is not his business while on the bench.

That is why I wrote, just over twenty years ago, the sentence that disturbs Professor Arkes: "Truth is what the majority thinks it is at any given moment precisely because the majority is permitted to govern and to redefine its values constantly." I never wrote a better line. And it has nothing to do with moral or cultural relativism, the view that there is no moral truth apart from the opinions of the majority; it has to do with democracy. The article ("Neutral Principles and Some First Amendment Problems," *Indiana Law Journal* 47 [1971]) was discussing Brandeis' statement that one of the functions of speech protected by the First Amendment is the "discovery and spread of political truth." The highest political truth for a judge is the Constitution of the United States, but if a statute does not contravene the Constitution, it contains the "truth" the judge must apply, because the people govern. It is kind of Hadley Arkes to speak of my "inclination to move steadily away from skepticism," but the truth is that I have never been a skeptic and have not moved. The misperception arises because when I speak of the judge's obligation to rid his judging of moral principles not found in the law, some readers think I am denying that there are such principles.

There appears to be a similar confusion about my statement that people differ over the source and content of natural law. As an empirical observation, that seems undoubtedly correct. Nor does Richard Hooker dispel any confusion, since there is none. Natural law may be "ordained by God" and yet not be divine law because discoverable by reason rather than by revelation. If one believes that God created man and then reasons from the nature of man to natural law, the ultimate source of natural law would appear to be God.

Arkes advances the "axioms of reason" as natural law in constitutional adjudication. It seems a bit imperialistic to claim the field of logic for natural law. The meaning of natural law is in danger of severe dilution if so much is placed within its boundaries. There is certainly no objection to the use of reason to decide that a principle in the Constitution has necessary corollaries. Much reasoning, legal and nonlegal, proceeds in that fashion. Though I do not think, as some of my interlocutors appear to, that Chief Justice John Marshall is the final word on matters legal, this method of reasoning from the implications of written constitutional principles to subsidiary principles is indispensable and was brilliantly demonstrated by Marshall's opinion in *McCulloch v. Maryland*. If logical reasoning is natural law I hereby welcome it into the courtroom and wish that it were more frequently to be found there.

It came as something of a shock to learn that my view that natural law is binding on a judge only when incorporated in positive law is itself natural law. I must decline the honor. That view does not rest on the "fitness of things" or the "logic of the law" but rather upon the statements at the founding of what the duties of courts are and upon the design of our government. If there was evidence that the framers and ratifiers intended judges to apply natural law, I would accept that judges had to proceed in that fashion. When an institution is intended and designed to operate in a particular way, when its members take an oath to operate in that way, it seems appropriate that the institution and its members should do so. I suppose it could be said that this duty of fulfilling an obligation is itself natural law. If so, it is a piece of natural law that requires the judge to confine himself to positive law in all else.

To Russell Hittinger's complaint that in my piece, "The complex issues [of natural law] are flattened out, and reduced to the problem of judicial review," I must reply that I addressed natural law in relation to judicial review only because Hittinger, Arkes, and William Bentley Ball did so. I had no intention, and for purposes of this discussion no need, to explore the "extent or depth of the problem of natural law" more generally.

The questions Hittinger puts—do I believe that "a responsible method of original intent can locate a natural law of rights or political institutions embedded in our Constitution?" and, if so, do I

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believe that "this can have any bearing upon the judge's interpretation and application of the law?"—tend to be swallowed up when he goes on to say that the question of deciding between two schools of natural law jurisprudence is "whether or not one or the other comports with the original intent of the framers and ratifiers."

We discern the original intent by asking what the words of the Constitution meant to reasonable men at the time of the ratification. In that inquiry, we have not only the text itself but the assistance of a great many secondary materials, such as the records of the Philadelphia Convention and the debates of the time. If we thus determine the original understanding of a provision, the question of which school of natural law best comports with that understanding is greatly diminished in importance—indeed, becomes academic. The only case I can imagine in which a judge would want to know about natural law would be if he learned that a particular version of natural law demonstrated that the text's words meant something other than we might think today and, further, that that version of natural law was widely held by the framers and ratifiers.

Hittinger's claim that possibly "more mischief has been done in the name of one or another doctrine of original intent or 'originalism' than under the rubric natural law" is misleading. He states that the *Dred Scott, Everson,* and *Roe* opinions, which he correctly describes as "notorious and pernicious," were "misguided efforts to resolve constitutional disputes via original intent."

Roe, contrary to Hittinger's reading, did not pivot on Blackmun's survey of past law to show that the fetus does not enjoy rights to be balanced against those of the mother. The case pivoted on the decision that the "right to privacy" included a right to an abortion—both natural right concepts—for, without the right to an abortion, there would have been no occasion to discuss the rights of the fetus. Moreover, the suggestion that the fetus has rights under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is incorrect; the ratifiers were not addressing that problem at all. The Constitution has nothing to say about abortion, either way. That is a subject for moral debate and moral choice by the American people.

Insofar as those opinions spoke in the name of originalism, moreover, their efforts were not "misguided" but disingenuous. Those were natural law decisions (in the sense that they rested on nothing in the Constitution) disguised as decisions based on the original understanding. Because originalism—applying the words as they were meant by the ratifiers—better fits our notion of what law is, judges who wish to arrive at results they prefer will, whenever possible, dress their personal views in the language of the original understanding. Any judge can speak in the name of originalism; that does not mean he is being guided by the original understanding, and the authors of those three opinions were not. No announcement of a philosophy, be it natural law or originalism, can control a lawless judge. The difference is that a natural law approach invites the judge to be lawless, while originalism requires that he actively dissemble in order to be lawless.

Perhaps Mr. Ball will one day accept the fact, which I have pointed out to him before, that I never "blasted" *Wisconsin* v. *Yoder,* the case he is proud of winning. I made the simple, and entirely unoriginal, point that the Supreme Court exempted Amish children from Wisconsin's compulsory education law in the name of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, but that if Wisconsin had created the same exemption by statute, the Court would have struck it down in the name of the Establishment Clause of the same amendment. I then said: "This is not to say that *Yoder* was wrongly decided. It is to say that something has been wrongly decided when the two religion clauses have by interpretation been brought to a collision." An unexceptional proposition, one would have thought.

Ball first denies proposing that "the Court should strike down, on the basis of natural law, statutes that contravene nothing in the Constitution," or, a little later, "with any version of anything," but, in between, he proposes precisely that. He finds that a hypothetical forced-abortion statute violates nothing in the Constitution except the Due Process Clause because the law violates a woman's natural rights. Natural rights perform for Ball the same function natural law serves for Arkes: a means to strike down statutes that contravene nothing in the Constitution. No natural rights were put into the Due Process Clause by the framers and ratifiers. Ball, and many other people, prefer to overlook the embarrassment that the word "due" modifies "process," not "substance."

Nor is he aided in attributing substance to the clause by his observation that "the source of our 'due process' concept was Magna Charta, a declaration of rights indeed not limited to procedural rights." Our due process concept derives from the provision of Magna Charta that says, "No freed man shall be taken, imprisoned, disseised [dispossessed of real property], outlawed, banished, or in any way destroyed, nor will we proceed against or prosecute him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land." The right to be tried by "the law of the land" in time became the right to "due process of law." The derivation Ball relies on is from one phrasing of a procedural guarantee to another. In any event, one can ransack the entire Magna Charta without finding anything of assis-

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tance to Ball's unfortunate hypothetical woman.

There is little point in positing unlimited judicial power on the ground that majorities may run amok. So may judges, and they have. I would rather entrust the making of new laws to a majority of the people rather than to a smaller majority—five out of nine. It is not clear why Mr. Ball thinks the people cannot be trusted to make decent laws but can be trusted to choose judges who will be faithful to a good (but largely unspecified) transcendent order. Any constitutional theory that lodges in judges the power to strike down all bad laws actually grants them power to strike down any law *they* think bad, regardless of what you and I and a majority of our fellow citizens think.

The Due Process Clause has no substantive meaning. Nobody knows what will turn out to be in the clause until a judge pulls out the rabbit he has put there. Or it may be something quite different from a rabbit, and rather more sinister. If Mr. Ball authorizes judges to go on the bench with their own individual annotated volumes of the transcendent order, the decisions may veer to the right or to the left, no one can say in advance. But one thing is certain: we are going to get the judicial equivalents of *Roe v. Wade*, again, and again—forever.

I hope this exchange has been useful to the debate over the role of judges in a democracy. It has been useful to me, and I suspect that the exchange will continue. May I always have such congenial and worthy adversaries. FT

Safari

The white man has laid down his burden
in the middle of Broadway
and under the exhausted plane trees
black men lie like rags
on the benches where once
old white ladies chirped in a row
watching industrialized man
roll by in regal successful cars:
the chrome polished,
tires with the treads still thick
and nearly silent engines
hot with power.

The burden that has been cast off
does not know what to do
for he had never wanted to be carried
and had indeed thought himself to be
the bearer;
but now we see that bearer and borne
were perhaps not what either had thought
and that the safari must halt
looking around in puzzlement
under the hot New York sun
as if wondering how it had wandered
so far from the veldt
and repack as travellers always do
when the load has shifted
and cannot be carried
even
by the strong.

Elizabeth Duran

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The Achievement of Jaroslav Pelikan

David W. Lotz

In 1971 the University of Chicago Press published *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, the first volume in a projected five-volume work entitled *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. In his preface to volume 1, Jaroslav Pelikan (a professor of church history, medieval history, and religious studies at Yale University since 1962) expressed his hope that the entire project would be completed "within the next decade." Ten years, however, stretched into almost twenty. The fifth and final volume appeared in 1989: *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*. The intervening years—1974, 1978, 1983—witnessed the publication, respectively, of volumes 2, 3, and 4: *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, and *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*.

Professor Pelikan's great work has literally been a life's work. Its original planning and outlining go back to the 1940s, its earliest drafts and sketches to the 1950s—years when he was teaching at Valparaiso University (1946-49), Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1949-53), and the University of Chicago (1953-62). (He had received the B.D. degree from Concordia and the Ph.D. from Chicago in the same year, 1946, at age 23.) No doubt the writing of the five volumes was somewhat slowed by the author's service as Dean of the Graduate School at Yale from 1973 to 1978.

My intent in this essay is not to provide detailed reviews of each volume. Many such reviews have already appeared in the professional journals. I propose, rather, to offer an overview of the total work, commenting on some of its most distinctive and impressive features. To this end I will make a number of comparisons and contrasts with that multivolumed work that still (a century later) stands as the closest analogue to *The Christian Tradition*, namely Adolf von Harnack's celebrated *History of Dogma*. In particular, as fairmindedness requires, I want to examine Mr. Pelikan's stated intentions: his own identification of the work's general purposes and of the concept guiding its composition and organization, with special attention to the pivotal notion of "development of doctrine." To this end I have had recourse to two of his other books, themselves designed as background studies to his magnum opus: *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (1969) and *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (1971). Such a procedure, then, should enable one to offer a judicious appraisal of the work's strengths and limitations.

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I

One comes away from a consecutive reading of *The Christian Tradition* with two superlatives firmly fixed in mind: "monumental" and "magisterial." I know of no modern work in the historiography of Christian doctrine that rivals it in both scope and size, ranging as it does from the so-called Apostolic Fathers of the early second century to the Second Vatican Council of the mid-twentieth century. Its nearest competitor remains Harnack's *History of Dogma*, first published in three large volumes in 1886-89. The last edition of this work, which appeared in 1909-10, totaled 2,369 pages; Pelikan's has 2,016 pages. According to Harnack, however, dogmatic development in the Western church found a threefold outcome or "exit" in the sixteenth century: with the Christianity of Martin Luther (whose evangelical religion ill comported with his and Lutheranism's fateful retention of the ancient "Greek" dogmas); with radical Antitrinitarianism and Socinianism (Unitarianism); and with the Council of Trent. Harnack, therefore, did not extend his history beyond the Reformation era, except for a brief chapter on doctrinal developments in Roman Catholicism from the Tridentine decrees to those of the First Vatican Council (1869-70).

There is nothing in Harnack, moreover, comparable to Pelikan's superb volume on Eastern Christianity from 600 to 1700. Harnack judged that the history of dogma in the Greek church had come to an end in the eighth century, and he evidenced little esteem for "the spirit of Eastern Christendom"

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and Byzantine orthodoxy (what with its reputed dogmatism, traditionalism, ritualism, caesaropapism, and general theological sterility). Though, like Harnack, of confessional Lutheran heritage, Mr. Pelikan expects that his readers "will undoubtedly discern the profound affinities of the author, in piety and in theology," with the spirit of Eastern Christianity (2:7). In any event, by writing volume 2 and by according equal attention to doctrinal developments in *both* East and West during the first six centuries (volume 1) and, again, in the centuries since 1700 (volume 5), Pelikan has decisively broken with a baneful tradition of Western church historiography that simply ignores "most of the development of non-Western Christendom except for those episodes, such as the schism or the Crusades, that involved the history of the West as well" (2:1).

What especially distinguishes *The Christian Tradition*, besides its comprehensiveness, its ecumenical breadth, is the author's mastery of an astonishing array of primary texts in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Old Slavic, and virtually all the modern European languages. (The listings of "Primary Sources" at the beginning of each volume occupy a total of 122 pages.) Pelikan devised a unique system of marginal annotation, with reference following reference down the side of each page in rich profusion, "without intruding the apparatus of erudition" on the non-interested reader (1:x).

The mark of the *magister* is evident not only in this massive textual-philological expertise (unsurpassed, I think, among contemporary historical theologians), but in the ease with which Mr. Pelikan handles doctrinal developments of great complexity and intrinsic difficulty—such as those relating to the Trinity and the person of Christ. One thinks, for example, of his pellucid treatment (in volumes 1 and 2) of such Christological "heresies" as Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Monenergism, and Monotheletism. (Someone has said that the historian's requisite virtues are faith, hope, and clarity—and the greatest of these is clarity!) For all their lucidity, however, these volumes are not "light" reading. Each chapter is weighty with expository detail and laden with citations to and quotations from the primary (and some secondary) literature. The total work thus has an "encyclopedic" character that makes for slow going. Still, reading it is not a *res arduissima*, simply a *res cogitans*.

The work as a whole proceeds, of course, chronologically. Yet each chapter of each volume is topical or thematic, focusing on a particular doctrine (together with its prehistory, presuppositions, and concomitants). In the author's words: "The date of the classic formulation of a doctrine or the consummation of an important stage of the development of a doctrine has determined where I have discussed that doctrine, including earlier stages of its development" (3:viii). For example, in volume 1, the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity and of the person of Christ (the God-Man) are treated in connection with the dogmatic decrees and creeds of the first four ecumenical councils, from Nicea to Chalcedon (325-451), while the doctrine of "Nature and Grace" (Christian anthropology) is first considered in chapter 6 (the next to last chapter) in connection with the "classic formulation" of Augustine of Hippo. This procedure makes plain Mr. Pelikan's determination to concentrate throughout on the formulation of *church doctrine*, rather than on the theological systems or leading ideas of individual thinkers as such (who nonetheless make their appearance in their appropriate "time and place").

Each volume also takes due account of the varied ways in which the developing tradition of orthodox doctrine was itself appropriated in new historical contexts. This tradition at once provided indispensable resources and posed inescapable problems for the ongoing task of determining precisely what (at any given time) constituted "the Christian tradition." Thus volume 2 begins with a discussion of "The Authority of the Fathers," since for the whole of Eastern Christendom—for the Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian (Nestorian, Monophysite) churches alike—the preeminent authority of the ancient fathers as doctors of Scripture was axiomatic, a *sine qua non* for all theological work and doctrinal construction. Volume 5, by contrast, begins with "The Crisis of Orthodoxy East and West," since "the very existence of church and dogma would, from the seventeenth century onward, confront the 'lamentable sight' of a growing attack by modern culture and secular thought" (5:9). Little wonder, then, that the nineteenth century—with its heightened sense of the historicality (and so the relativity) of doctrine—witnessed profound and prolonged wrestlings with the exigent issues of the continuity, viability, and truth of tradition in the modern world—in short, with the historical-critical problem of "dogma and its development" (volume 5, chapter 5).

It should be noted, finally, that each volume is designed to be read independently of the others, though there are helpful cross-references to earlier volumes (as well as cross-references within each volume). Nevertheless, the work is a structural whole, one "with a single overall concept guiding its composition and organization" (1:ix). To this guiding concept we now turn.

II

Mr. Pelikan's consistent purpose in *The Christian Tradition* is to provide a sequential account of the development of Christian doctrine.

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How, then, does he understand both "doctrine" and "development"? Pages 1-10 of volume 1 are given over to "Some Definitions" that are foundational to the total work, supplying its formal or methodological unity. Adopting and adapting a formula one encounters in Romans 10:8-10 and in the Augsburg Confession (1530) and other churchly statements of faith, Pelikan identifies Christian doctrine as "what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God."

This description (not, strictly speaking, a definition) indicates that doctrine is "the business of the church." It thus refers, first and foremost, to the church's public teaching, as distinct from the theories and personal opinions of its teachers. To be sure, what the theologians themselves taught is integral to the history of doctrine, since their thought "often reflected an earlier stage in the development [of doctrine] or anticipated a later one." Still, a doctrinal history must concentrate on "the common faith of the church," as distinct from "the idiosyncratic thought of individual theologians."

The history of Christian doctrine, therefore, is not to be equated with the history of Christian theology, or (more broadly) with the history of Christian thought, or (most broadly) with the cultural-intellectual history of the Christian East and West. Nor is the history of doctrine to be identified with the history of Christian ethics, worship, biblical interpretation, canon law, church organization, missions, institutions (e.g., monasticism, the papacy), etc.—all of which are included in "church history" and all of which *are* relevant to doctrinal history so far as they have directly influenced the formation of the church's public teaching. Nor, finally, is history of doctrine synonymous with its cognate discipline, the history of dogma, which focuses on the normative statements of Christian belief, i.e., the church's official teaching both adopted and enforced by various ecclesiastical authorities. Dogma, in this strict sense of "what is confessed," is thus a part of but not coterminous with doctrine.

The history of Christian doctrine, in sum, is broader in scope than the history of erudite theology and the history of official dogma, but narrower than the history of Christian thought, church history, and a general intellectual history. Doctrinal history specifically takes into account "what is believed" as this is evident in the forms of Christian devotion, spirituality, and worship. It takes into account "what is taught" in the forms of Christian proclamation, instruction, and churchly theology, all of which aim to communicate to the church at large the content of the word of God as extracted by exegesis from the Bible. Thus the writings of the theologians are, inevitably, a prominent source for the history of doctrine, but not only their treatises on systematic theology. No less attention must be given to their role as interpreters of Holy Scripture, hence to their exegetical works as well as to their dogmatic and polemical works. And, lastly, doctrinal history takes into account "what is confessed" in the forms of Christian apologetics and polemics, and of creed and dogma, which articulate the church's testimony against attacks from without and false teaching from within.

The church's belief, teaching, and confession constitute its "tradition," understood both as the ongoing process of communicating or handing on something (the *actus tradendi*) and as the specific content (the *traditum*) of that process. Pelikan's "primary concern is not so much with the formal concept of tradition [the act of 'traditioning'] as with its content or matter," that is, "with the changes and continuities of various Christian doctrines as they shaped history and were shaped by it." The focal concern is thus with the doctrines themselves and their historical development. Given his definition of doctrine, Pelikan perforce conceives such development as the historically demonstrable *movement* (with its changes and continuities) *from* believing *to* teaching and thence (perhaps) *to* confessing, *and back again* (insofar as "what is confessed" in creed and dogma becomes part of the church's "authorized deposit of faith" and so is *further* developed in the form of "what is taught" by the theologians and even in the form of "what is believed" by the faithful at large, since Christian piety remains a powerful factor in doctrinal development).

This movement, however, as Pelikan insisted in his book *Historical Theology*, "is not simple, nor does it always go in the same direction" (97). In the modern period, for example, "theologians often 'confessed' more than they 'believed,' perhaps more than they 'taught' " (5:viii-ix): one surmises that this was the case with the dogmas of the Trinity and of the bodily resurrection of Christ. Again, many doctrines have long been believed and taught that have never been formally confessed: e.g., the doctrines of Christ's saving work, of the kingdom of God, and of the Bible's inspiration and inerrancy. Again, some doctrines were believed and widely taught long before they ever attained dogmatic status: e.g., the Roman Catholic dogma of the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception (first proclaimed in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, although this doctrine, in its incipient form, had been opposed in the Middle Ages by both Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas). And some doctrines that have been confessed were not themselves taught during the early Christian centuries: e.g., the Roman Catholic dogma of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary (first proclaimed in 1950 by Pope

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Pius XII) and the central Protestant doctrine of justification by faith as entailing the divine imputation to sinners of Christ's own righteousness (though Protestants claimed that this doctrine of forensic justification was fully biblical, whatever its status in early church tradition). (The modern Marian dogmas, moreover, in view of their relation to the dogma of papal infallibility [1870], should not be seen as typifying doctrinal development.)

The actual development of doctrine, accordingly, cannot be construed in some a priori fashion; exhibiting no law-like regularities, it cannot be predicted. To be sure, some developments can be shown to have been "logical": the movement, for example, from confessing the "consubstantiality" of the Logos/Son with God the Father, at the Council of Nicea (325), to the parallel confession of the Holy Spirit's consubstantiality at the First Council of Constantinople (381). This development, in turn, necessitated prolonged attention to the doctrine of the Trinity as such, to the relation between the Three and the One (see 1:211-25). Pelikan has also tentatively advanced a "general rule" to the effect that "at any given time the Church believes implicitly more than it teaches explicitly, and that it teaches more than it confesses officially" (*HT*, 97). Nevertheless, this generalization—and all other generalizations employed by the historian of doctrine—must be both tested and warranted by the documentary evidence, i.e., by an inductive (a posteriori) inquiry.

Mr. Pelikan's description-cum-definition of doctrine, and of its forms and its development, is exceptionally flexible and serviceable. I cannot think of any alternative construct that would have permitted him to "cover" the entire sweep of Christian doctrinal history, above all in those periods (such as the post-Reformation centuries) when formal confessions and official dogmas have been rare, if not lacking, in most churches. In the following two sections, I propose to consider, respectively, some of the signal strengths and several limitations or problem-points in Pelikan's overall perspective and procedure.

III

Among the many accomplishments of *The Christian Tradition*, besides those already considered, the following impress me as especially noteworthy. Here, again, some comparisons with Harnack's *History of Dogma* may prove illuminating.

1. Harnack basically equated Christian doctrine with dogma, and the latter, in turn, with the early church's Trinitarian and Christological dogmas, which were authoritatively proclaimed in church councils, codified in creeds, and legally enforced by the ecclesiastical hierarchy (and by orthodox Christian rulers) as "necessary to salvation." Pelikan, however, by not focusing almost exclusively on "what is confessed," has been able to give ear to "all the other keys in which the church's doctrine may be played": in preaching, instruction, exegesis, liturgy, and spirituality. Further, by not equating dogma with the twin dogmas of the first four ecumenical councils, he has greatly broadened the scope of "what is confessed." Thereby he has overcome Harnack's excessively narrow and essentially juridical concept of doctrine.

2. Harnack maintained that "the history of dogma during the first three centuries is not reflected in the liturgy." Pelikan has demonstrated the untenability of this breathtaking assertion. In keeping with the principle enunciated by Prosper of Aquitaine (d. ca. 463) that "the rule of prayer should lay down the rule of faith," Pelikan shows that the development of doctrine, not least of creed and dogma, would often be inexplicable apart from the requisite attention to the church's developing patterns of worship, which thus compose "the melody of theology" (cf. 2:133-45). As regards the first three centuries, one need only recall the central role of liturgical prayer directed immediately to Christ, rather than to God *through* Christ, in the development of the dogma of Christ's deity (see 1:198-200). Likewise, the iconophile doctrine that ultimately triumphed over iconoclasm in the great Eastern "image controversy" of the eighth and ninth centuries is rightly called a "liturgical doctrine" (see 2:91-145). The same is true of the doctrine of atonement or reconciliation through the work of Christ (see 5:268), which has never received dogmatic definition.

3. Harnack was by no means insensitive to the importance of biblical exegesis for theological polemics and apologetics and so for the development of doctrine. Yet he tended simply to list key Bible passages in his text or in his footnotes, rather than discussing them in depth; nor did he consistently attend to this exegetical component of church teaching. One of Pelikan's premier achievements is his demonstration of the Bible's indispensable role in the formation and development of doctrine in *each* of its modalities. He both identifies the chief scriptural texts and accords them a luminous exposition. Thus the theologians' Bible commentaries, as well as their other exegetical discussions (so "incidental" to the inattentive or impatient reader), have been restored to their rightful place in doctrinal history: a long overdue corrective to "standard operating procedure" in most such histories.

4. Harnack's work is famous (or infamous) for its principal thesis that the dogmas of the Trinity

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and of the God-Man were "a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the gospel," thus marking a victory of the Hellenistic philosophy of religion over the primitive Christian message (though this original gospel was not then, nor has it ever been, eradicated). The result was that a fancied, metaphysical Christ supplanted the real, historical one. Pelikan, in volume 1, has justly protested that "'hellenization' is too simple and unqualified a term for the process that issued in orthodox Christian doctrine" (45). He argues—convincingly, I think—that early Christian theology achieved a definite victory over classical thought, while stressing that this "triumph of theology" was incomplete (see 41-55). Two doctrines in particular—the immortality of the soul (as distinct from the resurrection of the body) and the absoluteness (ontological immutability/impassibility) of God—are "perhaps the most reliable indications of the continuing hold of Greek philosophy on Christian theology" (51). This latter emphasis on God's absoluteness, as well as the Augustinian tradition's rejection of Judaism's refusal "to polarize the free sovereignty of God and the free will of man" (22), may be seen as evidence of the "de-Judaization" of Christianity. Conversely, a "re-Judaization" may be seen in the developing cultic-hierarchical idea of a Christian "priesthood" (with the bishop identified as "high priest") and in the growing use of language about "sacrifice" in the Eucharist (25). Finally, a strong case can be made that the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas actually represent a "dehellenization" of the theology that preceded them and that (in the words of Werner Elert) "by its dogma the church threw up a wall against an alien metaphysic" exhibited in the very speculations and heresies condemned by the creeds and councils (55). Pelikan's perspective on "hellenization," in sum, is much more nuanced and qualified than was Harnack's.

5. One of Harnack's most distinguished pupils, Friedrich Loofs, himself an eminent historian of dogma, once called his mentor's great work "a monograph on the rise and development of the dogma of the fourth century, written with genius and placed into a large context." Quite so! For Harnack that large context amounted to nothing less than a history of Christian theology from the New Testament to the sixteenth century—a surprising (albeit, perhaps, compensatory) procedure given his narrow definition of dogma. In the course of his three volumes, Harnack wrote the equivalent of full-scale monographs on Augustine and Luther, who, along with Origen and Athanasius, were his special "heroes of faith." This massive attention to the private ideas of individual theologians gave the impression of episodic development and of discontinuity from one period of Christian history to another. Pelikan's own great work, by *not* concentrating on the theological virtuosos and their "big ideas," has both uncovered and underscored the *fundamental continuity* of churchly teaching over the centuries. In his own words: "Because it is with tradition that we are dealing, we shall be interested not only in change but also in continuity, not only in conflict but also in agreement" (1:7). Nonetheless, by taking care not to impose a false uniformity on doctrinal development or to posit an a priori consensus, Pelikan's history has also remained open to the "new," i.e., to the emergence of "innovation" vis-à-vis the "tradition."

6. Pelikan's strict adherence to his decision to write a history of church doctrine, not of learned theology, has resulted in many historiographical advances. For example: intellectual historians of the Western Middle Ages have usually approached the monastic and scholastic theologians as philosophers of sorts and, in any case, not as representatives of and contributors to "the common Christian faith." Pelikan, however, has demonstrated that these same thinkers made important, even permanent contributions to the development of such doctrines as the redemptive work of Christ, the hypostatic union (of Christ's divine and human natures), and, above all, the nature of grace and of the sacraments. In the process he has supplied the fullest and finest summary to date of early medieval doctrine from the seventh through the eleventh century (the subject of the first four chapters of volume 3). Likewise, in keeping with the newer historiography of the past quarter-century, Pelikan (in volume 4) has firmly anchored the Reformation in its late medieval context and in its continuity with the succeeding age of confessional dogmatics (1300-1700). The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed a "doctrinal pluralism," which was mirrored in the doctrinal pluralism of the seventeenth century, save that the latter was now based on the rival church doctrines and confessions of the sixteenth century. Pelikan has thus broken categorically with all those older German Protestant histories of doctrine that evinced a monogamous passion for the religious thought (if not the formal theology) of the mainline Protestant reformers (above all Luther), as if the "reformation of church and dogma" were synonymous with *their* work and writings during the years 1520-60. One should add that Pelikan's focus on church doctrine has also marked a salutary break with traditional histories organized around other, more familiar foci, such as church councils or prominent pontificates or party labels or, most often, a few pivotal doctrines (*loci theologici*) whose treatment served the current needs of systematic and confessional-polemical theology.

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7. It was long assumed by all Christians, whatever their theological persuasion or confessional allegiance, that "doctrine" and "development"—that "tradition" and "history"—are incompatible magnitudes, since the church's teachings (especially its creeds and dogmas) are absolute, immutable, the product not of human history but of divine revelation, hence supernatural and timeless. Only heresy has a history! This perspective was universally operative from the first through the seventeenth century. In Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and conservative Protestant circles it has obtained well into the twentieth century. Perhaps Pelikan's greatest service (at least to the nonexpert reader) is to have rendered untenable, once and for all, this traditional concept of the Christian tradition. Without giving way to modish debunking or exhibiting a hypercritical spirit, he has employed the "new genetic way of viewing tradition" fashioned by modern historical-critical research, which makes "the location in time of a particular doctrinal formulation an essential element in the understanding of that formulation" (1:8). Temporally conditioned as they are, doctrines also develop under the pressure of new times and new situations, albeit such development regularly displays continuity within change (and vice versa). Thus, for example, Eastern Orthodoxy has ever deemed anathema the very idea of doctrinal innovation. Yet Pelikan shows that even in the putatively unchanging East there was "a new development of the doctrine of the person of Christ" during the seventh and eighth centuries (2:75-90); that the developing "mystical way of being a theologian"—from the time of Simeon "the New Theologian" (d. 1022) to that of Gregory Palamas (d. 1359)—actually produced "a new theology" in the strict sense, namely a new doctrine of God (2:252-70); and that the impact of the Reformation on Greek Christianity eventually required Eastern Christendom to produce its own statements of doctrine in the seventeenth century—confessions that moved well beyond a simple repristination of "Scripture, fathers, councils" (2:280-95).

8. Besides demonstrating the fact of doctrinal development, Pelikan has rightly warned against—and duly avoided—"an anachronistic reading of the history of doctrine" that assimilates earlier stages of development to later dogmatic definitions, on the assumption that "what eventually came to be confessed must have been believed, if not taught; that it must have been, as Cardinal Newman said, 'really held everywhere from the beginning' " (1:8). The "must," in this case, is neither logical (causally necessary) nor empirical (historical), but patently theological (dogmatic). Consider also the familiar claim that a given dogma simply rendered "explicit" what was "implicit" in earlier teaching and/or belief: this reading of history is anachronistic *if* there is no convincing evidence for precisely such a development. One of Harnack's animating concerns was to show how "ecclesiastical theology" took the church's finished dogma as its *starting point* and therewith obscured the complex developments that actually led to dogma's formation, with the result that this "official" theology not only lost its hold on history but was even obliged to condemn, retrospectively, the "theological fathers of dogma," whose thought now appeared heterodox in various respects (cf. Origen). Notwithstanding his own positive appraisal of dogma and churchly theology, and his many other differences from Harnack, Pelikan is fully at one with his renowned predecessor in his scrupulous adherence to the exacting standards of professional historiography.

IV

The Christian Tradition also has its complement of problematic features, which are, on the whole, intrinsic to its distinctive point of view and methodology. Among these features are the following:

1. As already noted, each chapter of each volume of *TCT* contains hundreds of citations to and quotations from the primary literature. The words and works of individual authors—many of whom are not discussed or even named in the text itself—are thus used to "illustrate" a particular doctrinal theme or perspective or development. Often these authors were widely separated in time, sociopolitical circumstance, and geographical locale. One also finds citations to the same author that come from different periods in his career and from different literary genres (such as biblical commentaries and polemical treatises). Such selective citation and quotation poses a series of questions, all related to the difficult issue of "contextualization." Has justice been done to the author's specific historical (temporal and spatial) setting? Has justice been done to the integrity of each author's teaching (especially to the carefully ordered and subtly nuanced teaching of theologians who were themselves systematic artists: such masters of the craft as Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl, and Karl Barth)? Has justice been done to developments within the literary corpus (and thus in the teaching) of a given author? Has justice been done to the different rhetorical and methodological strategies in the different writings of a single author? And has justice been done to the significant differences or disagreements among authors whose works are considered together under the same doctrinal rubric? For example, in volume 4, chapter 4, the writings of Zwingli, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Bullinger, Calvin,

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and Beza are all cited in support of a distinctively Reformed (as contrasted with a Lutheran) position on "The Word and the Will of God," though these theologians were by no means of one mind on such doctrines as the means of grace and predestination. It would be inaccurate and unfair to say or imply that *TCT*'s use of the sources has led to any falsification of the evidence. One can justly maintain, however, that it does entail a certain "homogenization" and "de-contextualization" of the evidence.

2. Mr. Pelikan has acknowledged that his definition of doctrine "answers one question by begging a great many others, including the question of what the Church is and how it is to be identified" (*HT*, 95). Given the many diverse and competing "churches" throughout Christian history, how is the historian of doctrine to identify "*the* church of Jesus Christ" that is the actual subject of believing, teaching, and confessing? For Pelikan this question (which involves the idea of the "true" church) is ultimately a normative-theological one rather than a descriptive-historical one. It is thus a matter for adjudication by dogmatic theology (with the necessary cooperation of historical theology). Still, the historian of church doctrine *does* have to work with some concept of "church." In the absence of any formal definition, one judges that, for Pelikan, "churchly" doctrine is belief, teaching, and confession that are congruent with what he calls (in volume 1, chapter 7) "the orthodox consensus" that had been reached by 600 in both East and West. In volume 1 Pelikan's account appears to read forward to and backward from this patristic consensus, which could thus serve to identify the "mainstream" Christian tradition. (See chapter 2, "Outside the Mainstream," on Marcionism, Gnosticism, and Montanism.) Churchly Christianity, then, is what eventually came to be seen as Catholic Christianity or as "the orthodox Catholic tradition." Volumes 2-5 go on to trace the most significant contributions to, changes in, continuities with, disputes about, and rejections of this orthodox *corpus doctrinae*, this *fides catholica*, which was considered by its original formulators to be of one piece with the normative biblical-apostolic tradition. This general procedure is surely defensible since it conforms to the canons of a "descriptive" historiography. (It is also one that I find religiously and theologically satisfying.) However, by basically identifying church doctrine with orthodox-Catholic doctrine, Pelikan has de facto adopted the standpoint of all those Christians who, since the second century, have ascribed such orthodoxy and catholicity to themselves in the conviction that their belief, teaching, and confession are in direct continuity with original biblical-apostolic Christianity and who have thus judged themselves to be "the church of Jesus Christ." Since he makes no independent effort to test or demonstrate the historical truth (accuracy, tenability, plausibility) of this standpoint, Pelikan must operate with the *self-evaluation* of the majority of his historical agents. (He thus recounts what they *believed* to be the case.) Readers of *TCT* may well find this procedure problematic because they will presumably want to know on what historical-critical grounds this functional identification of "churchly" with "orthodox-Catholic" and so with "biblical-apostolic" can be *justified*. They will, in other words, expect the critical historian to join his description with his *own* evaluation (as distinct from that of his protagonists).

3. Harnack insisted that in the history of doctrine "everything depends on where and how one begins." He also judged that "the simple fundamental proposition that only that is Christian which can be authoritatively established by the gospel has never yet received justice in the history of dogma." Hence he was constrained to begin his account with the preaching (gospel) of Jesus himself and with the common preaching (kerygma) about Jesus in the first generation of believers—for only so could one determine "what the Christian religion originally was." Mr. Pelikan, clearly, has made a dramatic break with Harnack's precedent by deciding to begin his account with the second century. This decision has many far-reaching consequences. For one, consider Pelikan's stipulation that churchly believing, teaching, and confession take place "on the basis of the word of God." Harnack would agree that they *should* do so, while seeking to determine whether they *have* done so by direct appeal to the gospel of and about Jesus Christ, as attested in the New Testament (on the basis of the Old Testament). Pelikan's starting point means, however, that his history "will not deal with the doctrinal content of the Old Testament and the New Testament in their own terms"; rather, "for our purposes the theology of the New Testament is not what Jesus and the apostles may have taught but what the church has understood them to have taught" (1:6). Pelikan, accordingly, recounts how the "word of God" was understood at any given time in respect to any given doctrine, but—unlike Harnack—he does not endeavor to test the *correctness* of these interpretations (and the resultant doctrines) through a *prior* determination of what is authentically biblical-evangelical. Here, too, Pelikan adopts the standpoint of his protagonists, in this case that of the church's biblical expositors, whose "readings" of Scripture he carefully describes without any explicit evaluation of their exegesis. This procedure, again, is entirely justifiable. Its particular value is that it demonstrates the *coinherence* of Scripture and tradition throughout the

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history of doctrine (over against a long-standing Protestant biblicism that posits the "aloneness" of the Bible's normative authority in an exclusive sense, i.e., in isolation from the ongoing history of biblical interpretation in, by, and for the church). I also view this procedure as problematic, however, since it does not address the critical issue of whether the entire course of doctrinal development exhibits a demonstrable *congruence* between Scripture and the interpretive tradition. Moreover, I anticipate that many readers will come to *TCT* with the expectation that its author will take into account the doctrinal consciousness of the *present* (including the findings of contemporary biblical scholarship) with a view to appraising the doctrinal consciousness of the past (including its biblical interpretation). In any event, Harnack would find it remarkable that a modern history of Christian doctrine would intentionally start with the year 100 and thereby prescind from the historical-critical task of establishing exegetical-theological criteria for judging all the varied doctrinal claims, advanced in the course of the Christian tradition, to be "biblical," "apostolic," "evangelical." This evaluative issue is an acute one because many claims of fidelity to the apostolic teaching and preaching were themselves "tainted" by anachronistic argument, in that a given historical outcome was simply "read back" into the time of Christian origins (as happened, for example, when a fully developed episcopal order of ministry—the so-called historic episcopate—was forthwith labeled "apostolic").

4. The concept of development in *TCT* is a subtle and sophisticated one. It is also an intentionally limited or circumscribed one, since Mr. Pelikan decided not to relate doctrinal developments to their *total historical milieu*, thereby distinguishing his approach from that of Ernst Troeltsch in his magnum opus, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1912; Eng. trans., 1931). Pelikan has called the latter work "the most articulate statement of the thesis that Christian doctrine cannot be interpreted—as it has been interpreted in our work—in isolation from its social and cultural setting" (1:360). Why reject Troeltsch's model? Because "if one were to follow Troeltsch, the history of doctrine would be absorbed into the history of Christian thought, which would in turn be absorbed into the general history of ideas" (*HT*, 90). Pelikan also declined to follow other, more current models of social-cultural history, seeing in some of them, at least, a blatant reductionism, inasmuch as "historians [today] have lost the ability to resonate to the religious convictions of previous ages, which they therefore feel obliged to explain away in terms of political, economic, or psychological factors" (*HT*, 80). These are all weighty reasons in support of Pelikan's chosen procedure (ones with which I largely concur). Still, in ordinary historiography, a full description-cum-explanation of historical development requires attention to the relevant social, political, and economic "factors" (not necessarily "determinants"), as well as to general intellectual currents, in order to account for the emergence of a given phenomenon (e.g., the iconoclastic controversy) at a particular time and place, and in order to account for the particular direction in which this phenomenon developed. Such "thick description," as it has been termed, is widely considered a necessary component of a fully adequate historical interpretation. Its absence in *TCT* is problematic.

5. Given the relative infrequency of the credal and dogmatic forms of doctrine since 1650, one well understands Mr. Pelikan's statement that in the later volumes of *TCT* "the history of doctrine will move into, but will never quite become, the history of theology" (1:5). Hence one expects that volume 5, in particular, will devote much more attention to "what is taught" (in the form of individual theologies) than to "what is confessed." Even here, however, Pelikan has declined to present "the history of systematic theology since 1700, much less the history of philosophical theology or the philosophy of religion" (5:6). This declination is problematic in view of the near equivalence—on Pelikan's *own* terms—between "doctrine" and "theology" in the modern age. Pelikan defended his procedure as follows: "But volume 5, too, bears the title *The Christian Tradition*, and that has had to determine the selection of topics and authors. It has likewise dictated that the use of the Christian past—of tradition, creed, and dogma—by the church in the modern period bulks large in this narrative, much larger than it does in most histories of modern theology" (5:ix). Even in volume 5, therefore, the criteria for determining what is "doctrinal" are not derived—as one would otherwise expect—from the contemporaneous teachings of the theologians ("the soloists," as Pelikan calls them), but from the tradition, from the creed and dogma of the Christian past ("the chorus"), which thus sets the agenda of "topics and authors." In effect, then, the modern theologians are measured by the premodern tradition, although many of them—especially those teachers associated with the so-called New Protestantism from Schleiermacher to Troeltsch (ca. 1800-1920)—contended that the orthodox tradition had by now devolved into a sclerotic traditionalism and so required a comprehensive re-formation: a far-reaching development that volume 5 does not trace in detail or discuss in depth. To be sure, we presently possess several first-rate histories of modern theology. (One thinks, above all, of Claude Welch's superb *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1799-1914* [2 vols., 1972, 1985].) Pelikan's

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focus on the modern church's "use of the Christian past," therefore, is a most welcome and much-needed *complement* to these histories of "thought" (as distinct from "doctrine" in its fullest sense). His volume 5 demonstrates that even in the midst of momentous cultural change and insistent calls for doctrinal change, there has been an impressive continuity between modern Christian teaching and the age-old Christian tradition.

6. It is clear, accordingly, that Mr. Pelikan's approach to Christian doctrine since 1700 is fully consistent with his concentration on the long-term development of "the orthodox consensus" in belief, teaching, and confession that emerged during the first six centuries and that was subsequently adhered to by the great majority of Christians as "the Christian tradition" (notwithstanding the serious disagreements about various components of this tradition that arose from the East-West schism and from the confessional divisions of the Reformation era). Little wonder, then, that the last chapter of volume 5 and of the total work should be titled "The Sobornost [Universality] of the Body of Christ" and should treat the renewed quest for Christian unity, and the attendant reaffirmation of the classic Christian tradition, as evidenced in the ecumenical movements of the twentieth century and in the work of the Second Vatican Council. *TCT*'s internal coherence, its steadfast adherence to its grand design from first to last, is an admirable achievement. What remains unclear in volume 5—even on its *own* terms regarding "the use of the Christian past"—is why (on what doctrinal-historical grounds) certain theologians have been singled out for extensive discussion, to the absence or relative neglect of others. Why, for example, does it devote some ten pages to the writings and teachings of Walter Rauschenbusch, while those of Schleiermacher are given rather less notice, those of Troeltsch are discussed but cursorily, and those of Paul Tillich, the Niebuhr brothers (Reinhold and H. Richard), and Karl Rahner are not considered at all?

7. In view of Mr. Pelikan's procedure and particular selection of topics and authors in volume 5, the title of this volume is problematic because potentially misleading. One expects Pelikan to bring "Christian doctrine *and* modern culture" into direct confrontation, into a sustained "argument" one with the other, in the process both describing and explaining the widespread, if not universal, "modern consciousness" of alienation from and opposition to the classical (orthodox-Catholic) tradition. In Pelikan's own words: "For the modern period in the history of Christian doctrine may be defined as the time when doctrines that had been assumed more than debated for most of Christian history were themselves called into question: the idea of revelation, the uniqueness of Christ, the authority of Scripture, the expectation of life after death, even the very transcendence of God" (5:viii). Even so, one asks: *who* were the primary agents in this massive "calling into question" of the Christian doctrinal tradition and *why* was this tradition widely felt to be so problematic or so burdensome or so intellectually untenable? Yet there is no mention, much less discussion, of such "great questioners" and "explainers" as Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach, Renan, Nietzsche, and Freud; no direct reference to Darwin and Darwinism (though there are several references to "evolutionism"); and only a brief notice of D. F. Strauss. Likewise, in the pivotal section on "Dogma and Its Development" (265-81), there is no treatment (or mention) of Troeltsch's important and influential writings on the acute problems posed for Christian faith by modern historical-critical thinking, nor of Troeltsch's (and Harnack's) project of "overcoming dogma by history." This section is dominated by the contributions of John Henry Newman. I count twenty-two citations to his writings, chiefly his *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (1845). By contrast, there are only two references to Harnack's *History of Dogma* and but five to the seminal works of Ferdinand Christian Baur, though it must be granted, I think, that Harnack's and Baur's (and Troeltsch's) ideas of development were more representative of "modern culture" than was Newman's idea. In sum: here in volume 5, if anywhere in *TCT*, Pelikan's account would appear obliged to expand itself into a wide-ranging cultural-intellectual history. That it has not done so—for reasons already noted—suggests that this final volume of *TCT* would more appropriately have been titled "Christian Doctrine *in* the Modern World (since 1700)."

V

"God alone knows the future; only a historian can alter the past." So said the American humorist Ambrose Bierce. And the wit was right! Historians routinely engage in altering "the past," so far as the latter can still be reconstructed on the basis of its surviving traces. Such reconstructions, presented in the form of written histories, always remain open to revision. *The Christian Tradition* is precisely such a work of historical revisionism vis-à-vis earlier histories of Christian doctrine, as becomes especially plain in comparing it with Harnack's *History of Dogma*. This comparison, one should stress, is by no means arbitrary or coincidental. Mr. Pelikan himself has said: "Superseded but never surpassed, Harnack's work remains, after more than eighty years, the one interpretation of early Christian doctrine with which every scholar

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in the field must contend" (1:359). Whether or not the latter estimate is presently shared by "every scholar in the field" is, for our purposes, immaterial. The salient fact is that Pelikan has chosen (on reasonable and defensible grounds) to make Harnack (along with Newman) his leading "dialogue partner" in the planning and execution of his total work. Hence a comparison of their two histories serves to illumine the aims and accomplishments of *TCT*.

No doubt other historians will wish to propose, and in due season may actually write, comprehensive histories of the development of Christian doctrine that break materially with the models of both Harnack and Pelikan. But that is simply another way of saying—and emphasizing—that "the past" of Christian doctrine is a *historical* past: one not available to us for direct inspection, but one still existing for us through inquiry, through the patient investigation of its traces, of the extant evidence. Hence *this* past of Christian doctrine is always subject to alteration because the evidence is always open to differing interpretations and explanations. Even so, the historiography of Christian doctrine is an ever-changing enterprise. Within present-day historiography, however, *TCT* commands the field—and rightly so, as should be plain from my critical observations and reflections throughout this review.

I also judge that *TCT* will be to future historians of doctrine what Harnack's work was to Pelikan himself: an indispensable point of departure for the continuing task of historical reconstruction. Pelikan has maintained that "the fact of [doctrinal] development cannot be appreciated nor the issues of [the] legitimacy and [the] limit [of such development] adjudicated [by polemical and dogmatic theology] until the processes of doctrinal development have been charted with greater accuracy" (*Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 42). He grants that dogmatic theology "must strive to formulate some a priori judgments about the development of doctrine" (39), but he insists that "the investigation of the development of Christian doctrine in the history of theology is too important to be left to the theologians" (43). Doctrine, that is, "develops out of earlier doctrine within the context of the total life of the Church in the world. And it does not do so on the basis of the a priori logic prescribed by the theologian, but on the basis of an a posteriori logic to be described by the historian" (51). In short, the accurate charting of the *actual processes of development* is the distinctive task of the historian. *TCT* has carried out this task with consummate skill and tact. In this it remains paradigmatic for all historians of Christian doctrine.

What, then, of the significance of *TCT* for other than professional historians? A full answer would require a much fuller (or quite different) review. Still, most of my prior comments have in fact been directed to the "general" reader, rather than to fellow members of the historian's guild (whose critical interests tend to focus on formal issues of methodology and conceptualization). In closing, and by way of summary, I should like to emphasize that a consecutive reading of Mr. Pelikan's five volumes leaves no doubt that to speak of "*the* Christian tradition" is historically warranted, despite perennial disagreements among Christians about various components of this tradition. There *is*, in brief, a multifaceted body of Christian doctrine that throughout the centuries has constituted "the common Christian faith." This body of the church's public doctrine has gradually come into being, and is still in process of formation (and re-formation), through the complex interplay of Christian belief, teaching, and confession in changing historical contexts, on the basis of the ongoing exposition of the biblical-apostolic gospel. This body of doctrine, accordingly, has a history of *development*, in which continuity ("commonality") has, on the whole, been more conspicuous than discontinuity ("conflict"). Such development has thus been distinguished, not least during the Reformation era and in modern times, by a continuing quest for *catholicity* (universality of doctrine) and *unity* (identity of doctrine), in testimony that the variety of Christian theologies has not precluded the unity of the Christian gospel ("the unity within the variety," in Pelikan's apt phrase). Having developed (and still developing), this body of doctrine is not timeless but is, invariably and inevitably, *time-conditioned*, though the latter proviso does not mean (as Harnack judged) that such doctrine is inescapably *time-bound* (for otherwise the manifest continuity of Christian doctrine would be historically inexplicable, or attributable only to inertia and a spurious "conservatism"). From start to finish, then, Pelikan's great history bespeaks its "churchliness," its ultimate grounding in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, who, in Martin Luther's words, "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." Hence one is not surprised to find that *TCT* closes (5:336), as it began (1:10), with the belief, teaching, and confession: "Credo unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam."

I submit that this church-centered history is of surpassing importance for the contemporary Christian churches, especially in North America, where an antihistorical (or, at least, ahistorical) spirit has long prevailed and is today, I think, even more acute. One does not have to look far (beyond one's sem-

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inary classroom!) to observe that a lively sense of "the Christian tradition" has become exceedingly attenuated within American Christianity (and not solely within the old liberal Protestant mainstream); that "tradition" and "traditionalism" are widely taken to be synonymous (though Pelikan justly opposes them as "the living faith of the dead" versus "the dead faith of the living"); that a laudable concern for ecumenicity in space ("globalization of theology") has not been attended by—and often militates against—a profound concern for ecumenicity in time ("tradition as history and as heritage"); and that classic Christian doctrine, where not dismissed outright as irrelevant or superannuated, is subjected to a variety of "total revisions" apart from a clear and coherent knowledge of this doctrinal tradition in all its remarkable pluriformity (its diversity in unity), and thus in its own intrinsic capacity for generating creative reappropriations and reinterpretations of "the faith once delivered" to the faithful of old. To be sure, there has been an egregious failure of historical-theological pedagogy here, in local congregations as well as in church-related colleges and universities and in seminaries and divinity schools. In this larger educational context Professor Pelikan's magnum opus may be seen as nothing less than what once was called *ministerium verbi*: a service to and of the Word.

And these reflections lead to my final word. One comes away from a consecutive reading of *The Christian Tradition* with three superlatives firmly fixed in mind: monumental, magisterial, and ministerial. FT

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Books In Review

The Education Reform Dodge

SMART SCHOOLS, SMART KIDS: WHY DO SOME SCHOOLS WORK? By EDWARD B. FISKE. *Simon & Schuster. 303 pp. $21.95.*

SAVAGE INEQUALITIES: CHILDREN IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS. By JONATHAN KOZOL. *Crown. 262 pp. $20.*

Reviewed by **Chester E. Finn, Jr.**

WILL THE FLOOD of education books ever subside? Since 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education declared us a "nation at risk," there's been a deluge. Wags have noted that we are menaced by a rising tide of education reports.

Most fall into familiar categories. These include "the problem is more serious than you thought"; "things aren't so bad; the problem's been exaggerated"; "the problem is plenty serious but I'm the only one who has diagnosed it correctly"; "the diagnosis is easy but there's no chance of a cure"; and "the solution is already underway, if only we were clever enough to seize it."

The volumes at hand are good specimens of a couple of these genres. Longtime *New York Times* education editor Edward B. Fiske is bullish about changes already visible here and there around the landscape. He seeks not to show that American education is in a hopeless mess but, rather, to demonstrate that we possess the ideas and techniques that we need, if only we would pull them all together.

Veteran social critic Jonathan Kozol, by contrast, insists that we've been barking up the wrong tree altogether. What really ails American education, says he, is that we spend more to school rich kids than poor. Kozol doesn't have much truck with the notion that outcomes matter more than inputs, nor has he any patience for the proposition that the delivery system is so inefficient that added resources cannot be counted on to boost educational results.

Both books are deftly written, full of examples, and—for this field—relatively jargon-free. But there the likeness ends. Fiske hits the ball right up the center of the doctrinal fairway of contemporary education reform. The ideas he espouses and the strategies he admires are the stuff of myriad conferences, studies, pilot projects, and foundation grants. They are compatible with the recommendations of many of today's eminent education gurus, people like Ernest Boyer, James Comer, and Theodore Sizer, who get a lot of ink in this volume and emerge as virtual heroes.

TO HIS CREDIT, Fiske also pays some attention to concepts like accountability and choice, ways of shifting the emphasis from inputs to outputs, and mechanisms for transferring power from the traditional school establishment to its customers. He's an honest journalist, not about to ignore important developments even if he isn't wild about some of them. Where his engine really begins to race, however, is when he takes up such contemporary enthusiasms of the education profession as school restructuring, site-based management, technology, and parent participation.

These are significant ideas and—as Fiske shows—they appear to work well in places where people go to the trouble to install and operate them correctly. But these are also painstaking, gradual, school-by-school strategies that originate within the education profession and are apt to succeed only where uncommonly gifted, motivated, and persistent professionals are responsible for implementing them. With some 110,000 schools in the United States, I find such approaches too slow and spotty to rely on as a general reform scheme.

The central idea in Fiske's book—and a good one it is, even if he repeats it too often—is that U.S. schools should jettison the "factory" approach that has characterized them since the nineteenth century, and transform themselves into "smart schools," places where children are "taught to think for themselves and to generate new information." This shift has its counterparts in business, health care, even the modern military. That it makes sense for education is illustrated by examples Fiske gives of places where it is already working. But those tend to be solitary schools, sometimes isolated classrooms. A few entire communities are making this transformation on a larger scale, and the statewide education reform strategy recently launched in Kentucky contains elements of this approach, but it's a long way from having conquered the U.S. education establishment. Fiske's book may give it an injection of fresh vigor. At least he's promoting an idea that, when successful, helps kids to learn more.

THE SAME CANNOT be said of Jonathan Kozol, who has made a well-publicized and lucrative career as a professional outrage merchant, of which the present volume is but the latest example. Every few years, beginning in 1967 with *Death at an Early Age,* Kozol has brought forth another book exposing what he regards as some grave injustice of American society. Most have had something to do with education or literacy. But his last book before this (*Rachel and Her Children,* 1988) was about homelessness. And a decade earlier, he wrote a paean to Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution (*Children of the Revolution,* 1978), a volume not uncharacteristic of American leftists whose rapturous visits to Communist lands

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over the years led them to assure readers that they had glimpsed the future and that it was working remarkably well, thank you. ("My impulse, in the face of what I feel and see and hear within the schools and streets of Cuba," Kozol gushed, "is to throw all caution to the winds and to speak solely of the decent aspirations and the eloquent ideals that have already been made real.")

Critics and commentators lap this sort of thing right up, of course. Kozol's tear-jerking subject matter and unctuous, aggrieved, moralizing prose style are exquisitely suited to the politics and prejudices of those who write about social issues (and often about books). Hence he is regularly lionized as a champion of the oppressed and the dispossessed, a writer who "sears the conscience," is passionate and humane, honest and terrifying, and so on. This reception, renewed every three or four years, has bestowed upon Kozol ample media appearances, occasional nominations for writing prizes, and a fine income from book sales and fat speaking fees.

Were he engaged in a harmless pursuit, there would be little need to say more. The pattern, after all, is quite familiar. He is a writer of a certain sort who picks topics of a certain sort and then says wholly predictable things about them. Tell me his next subject and, while I cannot be sure what examples he will proffer as evidence, I'll wager that I can outline his major arguments and conclusions before he puts pen to paper. So could anyone who spends an evening with this volume and its predecessors.

Kozol is far from innocuous, however. At best, the effect of the present work on the national education debate will be to blur the focus of reform efforts, deflect energy, and add static. At worst, he may set back serious improvement by several years.

Until the 1983 "nation at risk" report, the main concern of U.S. education critics, Kozol among them, was to foster greater "equity" along several dimensions: racial integration, fuller participation of the handicapped, extra help for disadvantaged youngsters, universal access to preschool and college, and more equal spending throughout whole states and the nation. The customary gauges of progress involved inputs, resources, and services: expenditures per pupil, class size, participation in this or that program, and suchlike. Scant attention was paid to outcomes, least of all to whether American children were learning as much and as well as they should.

All this began to change under the pressure of the "excellence movement." Results came to matter more than intentions, services, and

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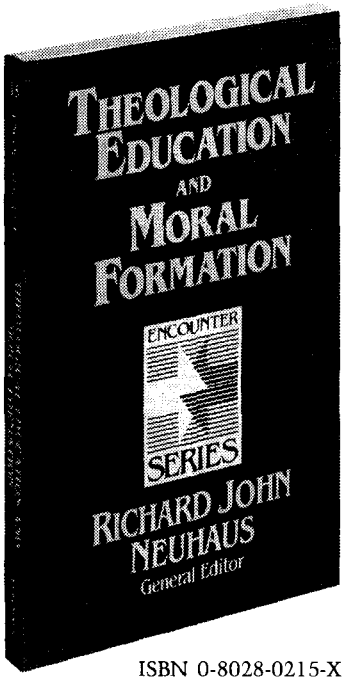

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spending levels. It was the dearth of solid results, after all, that had led the Commission on Excellence to declare that a "rising tide of mediocrity" was flooding our national parlor. Because of that alarm, and the changed mind-set that followed, deepening the skills and boosting the knowledge of young Americans have gradually emerged as our foremost education reform priorities.

This portends big changes in the education delivery system, of course, above all in its standards and expectations. But it does not necessarily mean large infusions—or redistribution—of resources. For we have also come to understand the implications of an important body of research that began with James Coleman in 1966 and has been extended and amplified by such scholars as Eric Hanushek and Herbert J. Walberg: evidence that there is no solid link between the resources that go into a school and the learning that trickles out the other end.

That's not to say that education is free, that schools can function without essential goods and services, or that the reforms we may need to undertake will all be cost-free. Nor is anyone defending third-world conditions in U.S. schools. Rather, what we learn from the research is that channeling more money into U.S. public education without exacting major alterations in how it goes about its business cannot be expected to yield loftier levels of learning among our students. The great challenges of education reform, therefore, are to spell out the results we want to achieve; to determine what must be done—in school and beyond—if we're to have a reasonable chance of achieving them; then to gird ourselves for the battles that will rage as the changes we need to make collide with an entrenched and stodgy system. Along the way we will, of course, also have to provide the wherewithal. But that's not the main problem we face, nor will solving it erase the harder ones.

Just as this line of thinking seemed finally to be embedding itself in the consciousness of elected officials, business leaders, editorial writers, even a goodly fraction of the education profession, along comes Kozol screeching that we've got it all wrong. We haven't defined the problem correctly and therefore, of course, we've been pursuing the wrong solution.

WHAT NEEDS fixing, Kozol says, with all the fervor of a fundamentalist residing in a time warp, is inequality of resources. His book consists mostly of vivid contrasts between schools in prosperous suburbs and their urban counterparts not many miles away. On the one hand, he takes readers into the dismal conditions of East St. Louis, of Chicago's South Side and North Lawndale neighborhoods, of the North Bronx, Camden, and San Antonio. There he finds—precisely as we knew he would—devastated communities, crumbling schools, and frustrated teachers facing severe shortages of essential classroom supplies and instructional materials. For comparison, Kozol journeys to places like Winnetka, Rye, Princeton, and Alamo Heights, where again he finds exactly what everyone expected: well-resourced teachers in well-equipped schools, and tranquil classrooms in posh neighborhoods.

Given this material, it's no great challenge for a writer of Kozol's skill to evoke a sense of wounded outrage at the injustices being dealt to children by these inequalities. (A similar sensibility could be touched by comparing the houses they live in, the playgrounds they play on, the food they eat, or the health care they receive.) And there's no denying that conditions in a number of schools are wretched, or that it's vaguely un-American for youngsters in some communities to have access to so many more resources than their agemates down the road.

So equalize, Kozol insists. Direct lots more money to schools and communities that lack it. If it's not possible to boost the total, then play Robin Hood. Take resources from wealthy communities and send them to poor neighborhoods.

I have no problem with spending more on education. We've been doing it for decades. We're spending 34 percent more (per pupil) in real dollars this year than we were in 1980, and I think that's swell. Nor do I have any objection to equalizing the sums we spend. In fact, that's been gradually happening for decades, too, as states became the largest source of education revenues and localities moved into second place, and as school finance equalization lawsuits and property tax limitation referenda have succeeded in one jurisdiction after another. The upshot has been a slow but steady trend toward greater uniformity of school spending, at least within state borders. (Federal education aid programs, tied as several of them are to the incidence of poverty, have a modest equalizing effect among states, but these comprise a very small part of total school spending. Hence interstate differences remain wide.)

I DO NOT DOUBT that we will continue in these directions. There's just one big problem: more—and more equal—school spending, in and of itself, won't produce better education. (Lesser problems surround the redistributive strategy, too. What about handicapped youngsters, whose "special" education costs more than average? What about states where leveling school expenditures actually reduces the amounts spent in big cities that are presently above the statewide per pupil average?) Money doesn't buy quality—not if we judge quality by how much and how well our children learn. We've had at least three decades of experience, costing us hundreds of billions in additional school dollars but yielding educational results so weak and flaccid that the Excellence Commission was moved to remark that had an unfriendly foreign nation done this to us we would have deemed it an act of war.

Kozol fingers me in his book as one who says that money doesn't

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matter. (He also delights, in print and speeches, in trying to demonize me because my kids attended private school.) That's not quite right. The problem with the money strategy in education is that it doesn't boost pupil skills and knowledge. This is only important, of course, if you believe the central failing of American education is that our youngsters aren't learning enough. If that is the main problem, as I think by now is obvious, money is no solution. (That's not the same, of course, as saying that none of the solutions will cost money.) What we must do instead is set standards, insist on accountability for results, furnish everyone with reliable information on the performance of their children and schools, permit multiple educational providers to compete for clients—another important form of accountability—and generally transfer power over important education decisions from producers to consumers. There are eight or ten other changes we should also make in the delivery system, including those sketched in Fiske's useful book. And some of these will cost a dollar or two, perhaps billions.

Many are radical changes, but Americans have been saying to pollsters that they're ready for sweeping alterations in education—and willing to pay for them, so long as the extra investment can be expected to yield greater dividends. Fiske helps us understand what some of those changes will look like, and thus gives the reform enterprise a boost. Kozol, alas, by demanding more of the same while wrapping himself in the (increasingly threadbare) raiments of moral outrage, points us in the wrong direction altogether. That it's the only direction on his compass is no surprise. In 1992, however, it's also no excuse.

The American Battlefield

Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America. By James Davison Hunter. *Basic Books. 416 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Jean Bethke Elshtain**

On first reading of *Culture Wars*, James Hunter's study of America's social divisions, I was greatly impressed. On reading it again, I am still impressed, but there are points at which I wanted Hunter to go a bit further, to push home his central theme with a bit more fervor, and to conclude his enormously informative cultural ethnography on a somewhat less agnostic note.

Hunter claims that "the contemporary culture war touches virtu-

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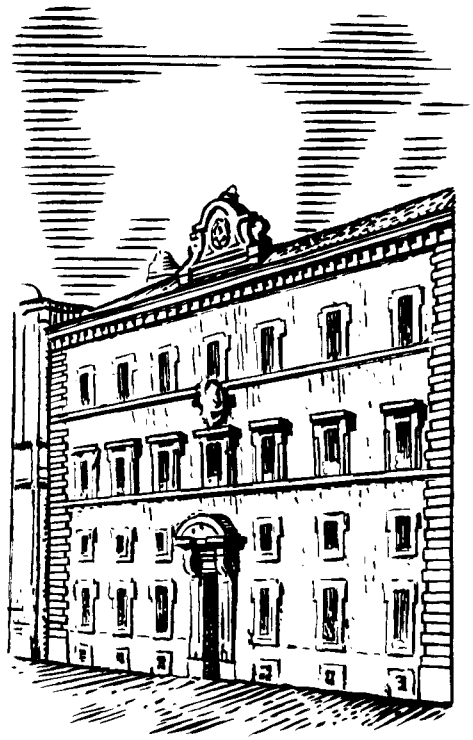

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ally all Americans; nearly everyone has stories to tell." In his prologue, he lifts up the stories of several characters who are poised as protagonists in the current cultural wars. For example: one of Hunter's prototypical cultural combatants sees Jesus of Nazareth as a radical personalist and goes on to collapse any form of authority into unacceptable social control. Another insists that authority, in the most stodgy traditional sense, must prevail. Like the authors of *Habits of the Heart*, Hunter uses the stories people tell to demonstrate that our culture war is not simply the preoccupation of the chattering classes but, in fact, a morality play being enacted on the battleground of everyday life. "The voices heard here," Hunter writes, "as well as those that make up the larger forum of public debate and discussion in America, cannot easily be caricatured; in the details each point of view is novel, indeed, incomparable." The by-now ingrained tendency to categorize the views of opponents with bitterness and pronounce anathema on all they stand for distorts the public debate, Hunter claims, inviting extremism and demagogic action and reaction. Softening the harshness of current options and opening space for dialogue and compromise is one of Hunter's central aims. At issue is nothing less than "how we as Americans will order our lives together."

THE CULTURE WARS are being played for big stakes, in other words, and Hunter positions himself in a kind of discursive No Man's Land, a zone separating bitter opponents who are armed to the teeth and determined to take no prisoners. Unlike Western culture's old cultural wars—wars over religious tolerance and sexual tolerance of a rather basic sort—the current fault lines of cultural conflict are not so easily sorted out into the "tolerant" and the "intolerant." (Such smooth and certain sifting was probably never the case, save in the textual fantasies of determined Whiggish propagandists—but that's another story.) Rather, America's cultural conflict is "political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding." A strength of Hunter's analysis is that he eschews the namby-pamby reductionism of emotivism and positivism in its vulgar forms, a world in which everyone has an "opinion" and no one a "truth." He appreciates the fact that the conflicts he exposes and elaborates are not mere clashes of "bias" but, rather, consist of fundamental commitments and beliefs tangled up with, and constitutive of, the identity, purpose, and "togetherness" of individuals and whole communities.

Those involved in cultural conflict are both passionate and interested on a whole range of issues—"abortion, child care, funding for the arts, affirmative action quotas, gay rights, values in public education, or multiculturalism"—matters tethered to what a culture transmits to its next generation and on whose authority that transmission occurs. Is it experts? Academics? Parents? Managers? Citizens? Volunteer groups? The market? The state? When Martin Luther was at work on his great translation of the Bible into German, he thundered in typical Lutherian fashion that, rather than consulting the experts of his day ("these asses"), one must instead "ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace about this, and look them in the mouth to see how they speak, and afterwards do our translating. . . ." The fight between the experts and the ordinary folks goes back a long, long way.

Those who suggest that the cultural issues enumerated above are somehow not "real" issues but a kind of foaming froth beneath which is the solid ground of authentic substance miss the boat altogether. Sexual morality, for example, matters to people. It matters because it has to do with how children are reared. It matters because it speaks to notions of responsibility and respect. It matters because it points to competing ontologies. It matters because it signifies who gets listened to and *authorized* to instruct the young and who does not. Hunter is on to the deep and abiding importance of issues that cannot be aggregated, measured, and crunched. He appreciates that cultural symbols are, in the words of Clifford Geertz, "vehicles of enshrined meaning."

Our public culture is more, much more, than procedural norms and codes. We are talking, finally and inexorably, about our identities, private as well as public, about who we are as a nation. Insisting that the forces arrayed on either side of a whole slew of volatile issues can "only talk past one another," that the views cast as volleys in each and every round of cultural combat are "indeed incomparable," Hunter maps a moral and political deadlock. The "cultural conservatives tend to define freedom economically (as individual initiative) and justice socially (as righteous living)," whereas "progressives tend to define freedom socially (as individual rights) and justice economically (as equity)." The combatants pledge allegiance "to different formulations and sources of moral authority," with cultural conservatives placing great faith in the wisdom of the past and cultural progressives seeing in the past little but ignorance and unenlightened intolerance. The conflict between the two sides takes place within just about every arena available—"family, education, popular media, and law." If you are an American, you can run but you cannot hide—you may not be interested in the culture war but it is definitely interested in you.

SO MUCH for the territory. What about the conceptual map Hunter offers? Hunter could use a guide or two in deepening and enriching his theoretical framework. Why not, for example, turn to Vaclav Havel, who insists that the old right-left divide leaves one with a sense of "emerging from the depths of the

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last century." Thus I found it with Hunter's categories of "orthodox" versus "progressive." To write at this late date about "impulses toward orthodoxy" and "towards progressivism" is to skew the debate and to commit oneself to a teleology that is, by Hunter's own reckoning, deeply suspect. I refer, of course, to the progressivist *Weltanschauung* that poses "orthodoxy" as that which must always be jettisoned in favor of some presumably more enlightened alternative. The categories "orthodox" and "progressive" are not conceptually neutral—they trail in their wake a whole set of presumptions geared against one side to the dispute. For ours is a culture in which to be progressive is to be American: is not progress our most important product? Counterposing orthodoxy to progressivism in America is rather like matching popery against parliamentarianism in Cromwell's England.

A related problem is that Hunter delays until near the end of his book making explicit his recognition that the culture wars are not being conducted on an even playing field. The "progressive alliance" is disproportionately upper-middle-class while the "orthodox alliance" tends to be drawn from the "lower, middle, and working classes." Here, too, things are skewed in favor of one side: *surely* the educated views of the educated are to be preferred to the blinkered views of the less educated. Hunter suggests an equivalence of warring armies that does not exist. Much of the position Hunter calls "progressive" has been institutionalized in universities and the knowledge industry in a way the "orthodox" position cannot possibly match. At one point, Hunter places the president of Yale, the president of ABC News, the ACLU, Americans for Democratic Action, and People for the American Way against Jimmy Swaggart and a fundamentalist newspaper from Decatur, Georgia.

WHAT'S WRONG with this picture? Denouncing extremists on both sides is well and good. But considering that one side can bring to bear the great authority of media and educational institutions while the other side can muster no such array of forces, a reader of Hunter's book might well conclude that the war is pretty much over and that what we are now living through, and with, is a mopping-up operation by the "progressive side" with its backing from the state-provisioned "financial, personnel, and administrative infrastructure for the knowledge industry." Why, one wonders, doesn't Hunter make more of this disparity and sooner? He acknowledges (on p. 298) that the "institutional resources and power behind the progressivist vision are at least as strong, or probably much stronger, than those favoring the orthodox." This is what is known as an understatement.

A third problem is Hunter's definition of cultural conflict as "ultimately about the struggle for domination." At another point he claims that the "struggle for power (which is the essence of politics) is in large part a struggle between competing truth claims." Why throw in the towel and line up with those who claim that beneath every well-argued perspective lurks a complainant hell-bent on hegemony? Power as dominion and force is one chief form power has taken in the West. But this does not and must not exhaust our understanding of power, or we are in deep trouble indeed. Hannah Arendt went so far as to refuse to accept hegemony and imposition as legitimate expressions of power. For her, such compulsion was anti-power, anti-politics. Power, she suggested, is the ability to act in common, deriving more from the Latin *potentia* than from *potestas*. Power in this view is relational, contextual, shifting. To reduce power to domination and go on to insist that this is the very "essence" of politics is to move in directions that undercut the moral claims Hunter hopes not only to understand but to sustain.

Finally, Hunter's solutions trail off into abstraction. He, along with many of us, calls for a revivification of public discourse in order that we might "sustain a genuine and peaceable pluralism." He believes we

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must, as a people, reclaim the center. He fears our liberal democracy is in a danger zone, having lost its ability to make "equitable public policy." But his "practical steps" to create "democratic possibilities" are themselves the democratic verities to which the "steps" are meant to lead. Hunter wants a changed environment for public discourse, a rejection of the impulse of a public quiescence, and a recognition "of the sacred within different moral communities and the weaknesses and dangers in one's own moral commitments."

Here he has happened on a central conundrum articulated explicitly by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*: "In order for an emerging people to appreciate the healthy maxims of politics, and follow the fundamental rules of statecraft, the effect would have to become the cause; the social spirit, which should be the result of the institution, would have to preside over the founding of the institution itself; and men would have to be prior to laws what they ought to become by means of laws." Rousseau's classic dilemma holds that a people must adopt the principles that sustain life in "the ethical polity" in a manner that gives rise to the very ends from which such principles ought properly to derive.

Put more simply, Hunter's "practical steps" as the *means* to achieve democratic possibility are, instead, *the substantive ends* of a robust, pluralist democracy. The committed yet ironic democracy Hunter calls for and cherishes (as do I) awaits its new and no doubt rather different Reinhold Niebuhr. That paragon, should he or she arise in our midst, will find *Culture Wars*—its weaknesses notwithstanding—an indispensable guide to our current discontents.

TV's America

WATCHING AMERICA: WHAT TELEVISION TELLS US ABOUT OUR LIVES. By S. ROBERT LICHTER, LINDA S. LICHTER, AND STANLEY ROTHMAN. *Prentice Hall. 332 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Terry Eastland**

ALMOST EVERY entry in the index to this book is a prime-time show. Among the very many: "Amos 'n Andy," "Barnaby Jones," "The Cosby Show," "Dallas," "Empire," "Falcon Crest," "Gunsmoke," "Hill Street Blues," "I Love Lucy," "Kate and Allie," "Marcus Welby, M.D.," "St. Elsewhere," "thirtysomething." The Lichters and Stanley Rothman (and their assistants) obviously had to watch lots of television to write *Watching America*. Worse punishment is hard to imagine, unless one is a television buff, as perhaps the authors are. But the Lichters and Rothman have done an important public service.

Someone had to analyze the now more than forty years' worth of prime-time sitcoms and dramatic series, for television says something even when it tries not to. Inevitably, as Aristotle would have foretold, it teaches. "Even the most innocuous sitcom carries messages about how our society works and how its citizens should behave," write the authors, who succeed as no one else has in identifying the social and political themes and values of prime-time television, and charting their changes over time.

This is not a book based—as so much television commentary is—on viewing impressions and interviews with producers and artists, but on the methods of social science. In addition to content analysis (which focuses on character traits and activities, and counts their frequency), the authors employ what they call "a holistic approach that examines plots and themes as well as characters." Studying a randomly based sample of 620 prime-time shows dating back to the early 1950s, they (and their research assistants) took as many as twenty pages of notes on each. Specifically, they focused on the plot, character, and thematic development of the shows; on the background, appearance, behavior, and motivation of each character (7,635 in all); and on the overall social and political themes of each episode. They fed this research into a computer, and out came, more or less, this book.

Watching America refers to so many prime-time episodes, and so often, as to test the commitment of even the most dedicated reader. "Shows like 'Taxi,' 'The White Shadow,' and 'WKRP in Cincinnati' continued to present integrated casts, but new roles were often on the dark side of the law," goes one typical passage. "Cops and robber series like 'The A-Team,' 'Knight Rider,' 'The Master,' 'Simon & Simon,' and 'Magnum, P.I.,' began to present Japanese or Chinese gangs in control of vast criminal operations," it continues. Lots of passages like these could have been cut. But then the book would have lost much of its authority as an exercise in social science. And it is important that social science confirm what a couch potato schooled in the humanities might have guessed: that (as the authors put it) while prime-time television began as an agent of social control, it has evolved (starting in the mid-sixties) into one of social change; that while it once served the status quo, it now cultivates populist suspicions of traditional mores and institutions; and that while it originally supported, it now tries to demystify, authority.

THE WORLDVIEW of prime time today, write the authors, is "sexy, sarcastic, sometimes cynical, and apt to cast a jaundiced eye on the very standards and sensibilities the medium embraced so enthusiastically a mere generation ago." The Lichters and Rothman at first seem unwilling to label this worldview a "less conservative" or "more liberal" version of reality, instead preferring to regard it simply as "populist." But having observed that populism has "partisan variants," in both a new left and a new right dating from the sixties, they concede that the "contemporaneous rise of populistic material in television entertainment clearly drew upon the left-wing variant far more than the right-wing." They eventually come to the point others, un-

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constrained by the demands of social science, earlier would have made: "Television preaches a kind of Porsche populism that reflects Hollywood's socially liberal and cosmopolitan sensibility. . . . Television's America . . . resembles San Francisco's Marin County—trendy, self-expressive, culturally diverse, and cosmopolitan."

Watching America raises several important questions, chief among them whether television's America is changing the real America. Only someone who believes that art and education are morally trivial could deny that television's America must have some impact on those who watch it on a regular basis. The further questions concern how that impact is typically registered, and its degree. The Lichters and Rothman quote two left-wing writers who hope that "all of [their work] together, night after night, year after year, may have a little bit of effect." The Lichters and Rothman agree with these writers that the impact of Hollywood's America upon America is cumulative in nature, but they are not able to measure, not in this book anyway, its degree—a difficult if not impossible task.

My guess is that the greatest impact of television's America concerns matters involving sex. Survey data show that Hollywood's creative community—its actors, writers, and producers—overwhelmingly reject traditional restrictions on abortion, homosexual rights, and extramarital sex. Lifestyle autonomy—the same concept ratified jurisprudentially in the right of privacy cases including *Roe v. Wade*—is the fundamental credo, and it is apparent, as *Watching America* demonstrates in detail, in show after show. All behaviors are morally equivalent, and rarely are the consequences of particular behavior explored, must less condemned. Prime time, even that part of it ostensibly designed for "family" viewing, is a sex educator, and this season there has been a consistent story line: the loss of virginity on the part of young characters. Hollywood may be against drugs and booze for kids, but not sex.

The good news about prime time—not reported in this book—is that network television viewership has declined by 25 percent since 1980. One must hope that Hollywood will get the message—or else that viewership will continue to decline until it does. And one must hope, too, that artists on the other side of the culture war from those who currently dominate Hollywood will find opportunity there. The question for the future is not whether Hollywood will again support the status quo or support authority but whether its offerings will continue to reflect and advance the moral shallowness—indeed the emptiness—of yuppie liberalism.

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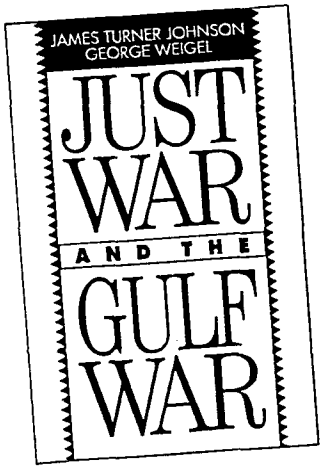

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From Aquinas to Aquarius

MEN ASTUTELY TRAINED: A HISTORY OF THE JESUITS IN THE AMERICAN CENTURY. By PETER MCDONOUGH. *Free Press. 616 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Edward T. Oakes**

IN HIS WITTY and affectionate autobiography, *Ours: The Making and Unmaking of a Jesuit*, the Islamicist F. E. Peters has this to say about his Jesuit training: "It was a marvelous nineteenth century English-university education of the type that Arnold Toynbee believed he was among the last generation to receive. It was as if we had been transported in spirit to the Oxford or Cambridge of seventy-five years ago, when gentlemen 'read Classics' in an atmosphere immune to the blight of German scholarship or the pricks of social anxiety. . . . I regret none of it. On balance, I still prefer to understand rhetoric rather than sociology, and the diagramming of sentences still ranks higher in my pantheon of the practical sciences than rat-running or macro-economics."

Peters entered the Society of Jesus in 1945 and I entered in 1966, but I sometimes think that the gulf of scarcely twenty years that separates our training is more abysmal than that which divides him from, say, Petrarch or Shakespeare. When I entered, Latin was no longer spoken throughout the ordinary working day (one hour of English had always been permitted at recreation); numbers of entering novices had dropped precipitously; and the secluded institutions of classical training (called "juniorates") so redolent of the river Cam had either been abolished altogether or had moved into an urban setting and emerged as just one more niche in a complex university.

Peter McDonough has taken as his subject the story of this remarkable sea change in the Society of Jesus, and his book is as remarkable as the story he has to tell. Of course, as a Jesuit, I have a certain intrinsic interest in such a story, and at certain points I felt that I was reading a map of my soul. But McDonough has not chosen to weave his tale merely to chronicle the fortunes of a particular religious order during one of its most difficult periods. However fascinating that story is on its own, it also serves as a prism through which one can glimpse the wider encounter of Catholicism with the American experiment:

> This book is not so much about the contrast between European and American Catholicism as it is about the interaction between Catholicism and the American way, as seen through the eyes of the Jesuits in the United States. My concern is with the curious encounter between two cultures that have much in common, made up as they are of layers of the pragmatic and the transcendental, but that also represent rival ways of life. My theme is the ambiguous meeting between a "nation with the soul of a church" and a religious organization with a commitment to the mundane.

THIS WIDER FOCUS adds an especially piquant urgency to the volume, for at its close, McDonough notices an eerie parallel between the decline of both the Society of Jesus and American society. "The schools [of the Jesuits] worked to deliver the prize of assimilation without the loss of faith. Jesuits were proud of this educational achievement, but they worried about the forces their success unleashed. [It] smacked of an emancipation of the instincts that controverted Jesuit ideals of self-discipline and social continuity. Similarly, the American phantom of unfettered masculinity was lost in Vietnam, and the technological and economic prowess of the United States has receded, even as its political culture has spread."

This juxtaposition of these two societies explains what might otherwise be a misleading title: this is not a history of twentieth-century American Jesuits but a history that terminates rather loosely around 1965, just as Vatican II was winding down and the war in Vietnam was gearing up (this presumably marks for the author the conclusion of "the American century"). After that, the Society hit a severe air pocket—and how much it will recover from the ensuing nosedive is anyone's guess—while the United States was faced for the first time with the postwar pathologies of inflation and stagnation and the ensuing disintegration of its cities and their schools. McDonough, however, refrains from facile predictions about the fate of either society and focuses his study of the Jesuits more on the quiet before the storm:

> I concentrate on the decades from around the turn of the century to the verge of the Second Vatican Council. This period was the fulcrum-time between past and present. Analysis of these deceptively quiet years reveals, as if in slow motion, the accumulation of tensions inherited not only from the Counter-Reformation but also conflicts that had been building up since the French Revolution and the onset of industrialization in the nineteenth century.

The book is vast and contains many shrewd analyses of the work of individual Jesuits (primarily writers), but in the plethora of fascinating details that McDonough has brought to light, two features of the story stand out from the rest and go far to explain the later decline in numbers and influence of American Jesuits: the suburbanization of the American adolescent and the internal transformation of the American Society of Jesus "from a rule-governed hierarchy to an organization that looks more like a role-driven network in which Jesuits search for, rather than being assigned to, jobs and tasks." McDonough is quite clear

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that the social forces resulting in these changes are inexorable, so much so that captious laments about a lack of stoicism in younger Jesuits or their reluctance to move from one mission to the other will either be shrugged off or will momentarily increase guilt without offering an avenue for a change of behavior (for guilt always becomes pathological without that avenue). And in any case, the mere resort to exhortation would imply that Jesuits now have a purchase on forces that in fact continue to victimize them.

In one particularly insightful chapter (amusingly titled "From Aquinas to the Age of Aquarius"), McDonough explains that feature of younger Jesuits that has always tended to baffle their elders: their almost obsessive concern with affectivity and personal well-being. While to an outsider this might seem like a deplorable capitulation to the worst excesses of baby-boom narcissism, it is really a symptom of something that came to a boil earlier:

> From the 50s to the 60s, traditional understandings of what constituted emotional support and psychic satisfaction lost plausibility. The standards by which authority was judged became more demanding, and expectations regarding personal fulfillment shifted upward. By the end of the 50s the heroism of stoic understatement and the norm of emotional distance began to seem less bearable and even less noble in principle.

The roots of this psychic shift occurred in two phases. First, as more and more Catholic families moved to the suburbs and bought those newly invented televisions, their children's emotional lives became atomized. Often raised in separate bedrooms and cathected directly to the TV set (virtually a robotic baby sitter), they often grew up without that intense backyard socialization of alley games and tree houses so essential to the formation of childhood friendships. And suddenly American youngsters became more familiar with the names of the Mouseketeers than of the kids who lived two—by now, large—blocks away.

This suburbanization completely altered the experience of Jesuit formation for new entrants, and this constitutes the second phase. Here, for example, is one Jesuit's account of what it was like to go through the training earlier, before the invention of TV:

> It was shared, like boot camp. It was part of your fiber. Everybody did it. And people who were thirty years our senior had done it. And you could talk about it. You could make parenthetical references to snippets of rules that everybody recognized. You might do it in jest. But it was all part of the fabric, of the fiber [of our lives].

In other words, group cohesion was so regular a part of not only childhood socialization but also of the Jesuit training that implicit emotional support suffused the very atmosphere of the times. But the search for emotional sustenance has lately become so exaggerated precisely because it no longer seems so pervasively available (it was the earlier atmosphere of easy camaraderie that made all the other more specific acts of asceticism bearable).

The other issue, that of the transformation of the Jesuits from rule-governed hierarchy to role-driven network, is much more intractable, for behind that metamorphosis is the inevitable transformation of Jesuit schools, those all-hungry maws that absorb about 80 percent of Jesuit manpower. Once more, the forces that led to this change were well in place before Vatican II or the professional ambitions of younger Jesuits came into play. One fascinating indication of this emerges from the report of an official visitor to the U.S. from the General of the Jesuits in Rome. Writing in 1949, he told of how disturbed he was at what he saw:

> [Traveling from Rome] I crossed the ocean with a graduate of one of our schools. . . . He recalled two outstanding professors of his time: one was a professed atheist, the other decidedly red in the color of his social theories. The head of one of our Schools of Business Administration was quoted to me as saying, "Don't talk to me about [papal social encyclicals]. They have no place in this school while I am here." Some professors in a School of Education are admittedly of the philosophical tribe of John Dewey and the shelves of the library offer a large assortment of books propagating his errors. In the Department of Philosophy a lay professor insists that a scientific study of psychology must be divorced from a Catholic viewpoint. An infiltration of Freudianism has

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> been noted in the psychiatry section of a School of Social Service. And then one may ask if it is not very difficult to maintain a Catholic environment in a school where more than 50 percent of the students are non-Catholics and many of the professors are the same.

OF COURSE, one may either knowingly smile at the charming naiveté of the Roman visitor and congratulate the Jesuits on how far they have come on the road to modernity, or one may nod in sad agreement that these early trends have now come back to haunt the premier work of the Society of Jesus, co-opting their flagship institutions and robbing them of their reason for being. But for McDonough, both reactions would be beside the point. For if these trends are really as deplorable as the Roman Admonitor would have it, then only one response was possible: a complete ghettoization of higher education and the uprooting and transformation of urban universities into small, self-contained liberal arts colleges of about two hundred students staffed almost entirely by Jesuits. But such an option refutes itself even at its first mention, for it was precisely the mission of Jesuit education to train Catholics *out* of the ghetto, which in 1949 they were on the verge of succeeding in doing. At this juncture a complete reversal of course was not just impractical but impossible.

But the other option, the one in fact the Jesuits did take, *had* to take (letting enrollment balloon with the GI bill and making the various departments judge their own direction by norms internal to the debate with their peers throughout the world of higher education), has its own costs as well. For now the impact of Jesuits on their schools must be measured by something rather vaguely referred to as "influence" (whatever that might mean). Ministry in education has always been a work with what McDonough calls a "notoriously soft bottom line," but now that softness has turned into something about as measurable as fog. The talk now is all about preserving a Jesuit "ethos." For an order renowned for its pragmatic bent, this shift to measuring effects by "ethos" has not been an easy one.

But the real impact of this option has been to transform the nature of the *internal* governance of the Society as well. Mobility has always been a hallmark of the Society of Jesus; where other orders in the Church such as the Benedictines centered their whole spirituality around the stability of the monastery (their vows even include one of stability), the Jesuits prided themselves on their ability to pick up and go at a moment's notice. This is no longer true, indeed can no longer be true, and again for structural reasons. Hiring in Jesuit colleges and universities is by and large now department-determined, and the norms for employment and promotion are exclusively academic (although, oddly enough—and this is a painful story to tell—because of past history, some departments are actively hostile to hiring a Jesuit).

The impact of this professionalization of ministry on Jesuit mobility could not be more direct: to get hired, one must first establish oneself in a field by writing a dissertation that will be unlikely to have any bearing on Catholic doctrine or for which Catholic doctrine will itself have anything to say; then after being hired, one must steadily accumulate a record of academic productivity to qualify for tenure, the granting of which virtually guarantees that one will remain locked into that position for life.

Part of the fascination of this book is the way the author explains how this dilemma is, as he says, part of "the general challenge to top-down control posed by professionalization and organizational complexity" everywhere. Indeed, it was the very inexorability of this challenge that recently brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implosion of Communist ideologies throughout the world (Lenin taught himself Spanish so he could read Ignatius in the original).

The Society of Jesus is clearly being swept along by these same immensely powerful social forces as everyone else, and not just in America. But in the United States, the situation is particularly rich in pathos, because the earlier successes of the Society in America have been so stellar and because the story of its decline bears such an uncanny resemblance to the decline of the country it has served with such distinction. Both societies now know what it means to be a victim of one's own success: both the Society of Jesus and the American government have been forced to look on while their clients (whether they be students or the client-democracies of Japan and Germany) have gone their own way, having learned their lessons all too well and bettering their masters in the very skills that made them what they are.

I confess that I have inherited from the Peters generation at least one legacy that links my generation with his: like him, my humanistic training has led me to entertain a rather sneering disdain, a certain hauteur, for the social sciences, which I always took to be a body of rather obvious insights encased in a needlessly arcane jargon, all in a vain effort to parade before its betters decked out as science and knowledge. McDonough has taught me otherwise. Indeed, not since the last time I read a book by Peter Berger have I seen a work of social science so penetrating, so teeming with insights on every page, so rich in pathos and nobility of purpose, so flashingly illuminating . . . and so devastating.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE OXFORD STUDY BIBLE: REVISED ENGLISH BIBLE WITH THE APOCRYPHA. *Oxford University Press. 1,623 pp. $37.95.*

With so many translations and study aids available, clergy and literate laity must from time to time make a decision about which edition of the Bible to adopt as their daily working edition. *The Oxford Study Bible* is a very strong candidate indeed. Its

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chief merit is the accuracy and felicity of the translation of the biblical texts. This Revised English Bible is a modest revision of what was called The New English Bible. Also recently issued is *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, and the translation there is The New Revised Standard Version. Unfortunately, that revision tries to accommodate, however cautiously, current concerns about "gender-inclusive" language, and the strain of that accommodation is frequently obtrusive and, at some points, arguably distortive. The *Study Bible* devotes almost 200 pages to nineteen articles reflecting the current state of biblical scholarship on everything from literary forms to disputes over textual dating and the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Given the volatile nature of scholarly opinion, much of this material is inevitably tendentious and will likely be dated in the near future. That caveat aside, readers might well consider *The Oxford Study Bible* with its splendid translation of the biblical texts as the standard edition for both personal study and public reading.

Work in the Spirit: Towards a Theology of Work. By Miroslav Volf. *Oxford University Press. 252 pp. $29.95.*

The author teaches systematic theology at Fuller Seminary and here urges a shift from a "vocational" to a "pneumatological" understanding of work. The density of the English, the superfluity of jargon, and the untranslated Latin will challenge many readers, but the effort will be rewarded for those who have a serious interest in the development of Christian thought about work. While the sixteenth-century Reformers understood the theological dignity of a specific vocation to which a Christian is called, says Wolf, we must now understand that Christians are "gifted and called to various tasks by the Spirit," and faithfulness to the call may mean a variety of vocational decisions.

Conservative Texts: An Anthology. Edited with an Introduction by Roger Scruton. *St. Martin's. 352 pp. $39.95 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

Extracts from the writings of twenty-four important conservative thinkers from Burke to Kirk, with a helpful overview essay by the editor. A good introduction both for students of political philosophy and for political practitioners seeking to better understand the intellectual foundations of conservatism. Somewhat overpriced, though.

The Ultimate Church: An Irreverent Look at Church Growth, Megachurches, & Ecclesiastical "Show Biz." By Tom Raabe. *Zondervan. 172 pp. $8.99 paper.*

The subtitle says it all. The evangelical infatuation with elaborately orchestrated bigness has been around long enough to have produced its parodist. Raabe's send-up is frequently outrageous, always witty, and fully warranted.

Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection. By Carole Straw. *University of California Press. 295 pp. $13.95 paper.*

Gregory, who was pope from 590-604, is usually called great because of his many church reforms. This very readable and persuasive study focuses on Gregory as theologian and spiritual teacher. The author, who teaches history at Mount Holyoke College, has produced a book that should be of interest to all who would be conversant with one of the truly important figures in the Great Tradition.

An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue. By Paul J. Griffiths. *Orbis. 113 pp. $39.95 cloth, $16.95 paper.*

There is a polemical edge aimed at "teacup ecumenists and lazy pluralists," but the heart of this little book is a bracing argument that intellectual honesty in interreligious dialogue is absolutely essential if all participants are not to be deceived and disserved. The author teaches philosophy of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

In Search of Christian Unity: Basic Consensus / Basic Differences. Edited by Joseph A. Burgess. *Fortress Press. 259 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Sixteen essays by some of the leading figures in serious ecumenism today. The conference from which the volume emerges was sponsored by Lutherans so, perhaps excusably, Lutherans are overrepresented. This is an important examination of whether "fundamental consensus" exists between the churches sufficient to make ecclesial reconciliation possible. Most essayists seem convinced that it does not.

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Richard John Neuhaus

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A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

The Naked Public Square: A Metaphor Reconsidered

Christian groups called "Adventist" trace their roots to 1844, the year that some had fixed for the advent, or Second Coming, of Christ. Although now more cautious about setting definite dates, Adventists still live in expectation of an imminent return, and it perhaps follows that they do not work themselves up about the long-term culture-forming tasks of Christianity. The largest group is the Seventh-day Adventists with about 700,000 members in this country. They publish *Liberty*, which bills itself as "a magazine of religious freedom," and is a mainstay of "strict separationist" thinking about the relationship between church and state. Adventists describe themselves as "staunchly Protestant," which means in this case that they tend to a rather definite anti-Catholicism. Not least among the errors of the papacy, in their view, is the establishment of Sunday as the Christian sabbath.

A recent issue of *Liberty* featured the threat of the Pope, with the collusion of George Bush and others, taking over the political leadership of the new world order. The cover pictures the Pope sitting on a throne that is inscribed "The New World Order," with Bush and Gorbachev flanking him on lesser seats of power. While that may seem somewhat bizarre, it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence of *Liberty* and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in agitating church-state questions. With world headquarters in Washington, D.C., the Adventists maintain a very large and well-funded staff for whom strict separationism is both central dogma and high-priority cause.

Another recent issue of *Liberty* devotes its cover and eight pages of text to "The Naked Public Square." We are told: "The editors of *Liberty* find much to applaud *and* to criticize in Neuhaus' views. It is because we find them to be in part meritorious and in toto provocative that we asked spokesmen for national organizations often heard in the Public Square to respond to them." The balance between applause and criticism might be inferred from the title given the entire discussion: "The Naked Public Square and Other Fairy Tales." The spokesmen for organizations prominent in the national debate are Robert L. Maddox of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Barry W. Lynn of the American Civil Liberties Union, and Oliver S. Thomas of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

To Review and Clarify

There is little new in the objections raised to the arguments advanced by this writer over the years, but perhaps the very familiarity of the objections provides a seasonable opportunity to review and clarify what is, and what is not, meant by saying that the public square is naked. All three critics go to some length to point out that religion is flourishing in America, religious individuals as well as churches regularly speak out on public issues, and religious institutions enjoy benefits such as tax exemption; *ergo*, the public square is not naked of religion and the influence of religion. Maddox of Americans United rehearses the unhappy history of the union of church and state in coercing consciences. Remember, he cautions us, the Spanish Inquisition and the burning of Michael Servetus in Calvin's Geneva. Being a temperate man, he allows that "the products of church-state cooperation in America today are obviously less extreme." But there are similar problems, he says, such as Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, almost getting the city to permit a bond issue in its favor (later overturned by the Virginia Supreme Court), and such as the rabbi who prayed at a school graduation in Rhode

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Island. Americans should know, says Maddox, that if the Supreme Court upholds the graduation prayer, it "could directly affect them and their right to follow their own consciences."

Lynn of the ACLU contends that religion can do what it wants, except when public funds are involved. "Watering at the public trough means you have to accept public water standards. These days too many religious institutions want both the absolute right to define their 'mission' and the collateral right to have the taxpayers fund it." He is worried that President Bush, among others, has overstepped the separationist line in official proclamations by "quoting from the Bible and encouraging religious worship." Of course "all citizens have the right to proclaim the 'truth' about public policy to anyone who will listen." But that is not the case when religion touches government, or vice versa. "Those who serve as agents of government have the legal responsibility not to use that official status to advance the cause of a particular faith or all faiths," says Lynn. But there is, he insists, no naked public square.

Thomas of the Joint Baptist Committee is obviously fed up with people who wave *The Naked Public Square* in his face. "[Neuhaus'] book was readily found in the hands of preachers and pundits across the nation who used it to support their argument . . . that government has become increasingly indifferent, even hostile, to religion." Far from there being a naked public square, "what I have found is a public square that is not only well-clothed in the garb of religion but perhaps a bit overdressed." Once again, we are told that religion flourishes, religious lobbies are active in the political arena, and, Thomas notes approvingly, government grants assist religious groups "in providing housing for the homeless, day care, food, health care, higher education, and numerous other worthwhile services." All that is required, says Thomas, is "that government remain neutral in matters of religion." He deplores the Arizona legislature's declaring this to be a Christian nation, and favors our church-state relations over those of Western Europe "where there is prayer in the schools but the churches are empty." So much for the idea of the naked public square, Thomas concludes.

In Response

A few brief responses: Yes, religion flourishes in America. It is therefore all the more intolerable that, in a democracy where over 90 percent of the people identify themselves as Christians and Jews, the government, the media, and major cultural institutions tend to exclude the religion factor from our public life. Yes, religious groups regularly (even obsessively) lobby on public issues. Nobody that we know has ever suggested that the free exercise of religion and free speech have been entirely eliminated from American life. Yes, the Spanish Inquisition was awful, and Calvin's Geneva was a gravely flawed experiment. We do well to remember, however, that in somewhat more contemporary history, such as this century, the great tyrannies have been virulently secular and most specifically at war with Judaism and Christianity. Hitler and Stalin in full genocidal swing killed more people in an hour of any given afternoon than did the Inquisition in two centuries. To suggest that the prayer of the Rhode Island rabbi denies people "their right to follow their own consciences" and raises the specter of the Spanish Inquisition is slightly fanciful, or perhaps the word is hysterical.

The refusal to let Liberty University benefit from a municipal bond issue is a clear instance of penalizing the free exercise of religion. Nobody disputes the fact that there would have been no problem if the university had agreed to eliminate religion as an essential component of its reason for being. Schools that insist upon freely exercising their religion will not receive government help; those that do not so insist will get it. This is not neutrality; this is—in effect if not in intent—hostility. To their great shame, numerous colleges and universities, both Protestant and Catholic, have in recent decades diluted or abandoned religious teaching in order to accommodate that hostility.

Lynn from the ACLU has the virtue of being straightforward: Where there is government involvement there must be government control. That means religion must be eliminated because otherwise taxpayers who are nonbelievers would be paying for its support. Since, through regulation and funding, expansive government is involved almost everywhere, whether directly or indirectly, it follows that religion must be eliminated almost everywhere. It is a simple formula, and a chief reason for the naked public square. President Bush and other "agents of government" may be religious in private, but they must not speak or act in a way that betrays their convictions in public, lest they use their "status" to advance the cause of religion. Mind, government officials and government-assisted programs can promote any other ideology or conviction, so long as it is not identified as "religious." Whereas it was once thought that the government was to protect the free exercise of religion, it is now flatly asserted that, where government goes, the free exercise of religion must stop.

Mr. Thomas is a different case. If he is not being disingenuous, he is certainly less than candid. He knows better. His posture is perhaps one reason

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why the Southern Baptist Convention and others have withdrawn support from his Baptist Joint Committee. We hold no brief for the legislature of Arizona, and the notion that this is a Christian nation strikes us as more false than true, but it has nothing to do with the subject at hand. Thomas' citing of government grants to religious groups working with the poor and needy is germane, and he knows full well the innumerable cases in which such assistance is contingent upon the groups eliminating anything distinctively religious in their program. The day this is being written, the pastor of the Moravian Church on 28th and Lexington, which runs one of New York's largest feeding programs, was informed by the city that he must discontinue his weekly morale-boosting talk to the men and women who come for free food. Never mind that he says he does not teach Christian doctrine (one may wonder why not), it is a government program and his being a clergyman might give the appearance of advancing religion.

Thomas knows full well that such instances of the repression of religious freedom, some petty and some gross, can be multiplied by the thousands around the country. Many of them, of course, have to do with government schools, where government is anything but "neutral" toward the exercise of religion. Putting aside legal disputes about the meaning of the religion clause of the First Amendment, it is past time to candidly recognize a simple fact. In a society that is strongly and pervasively religious, it is not possible to have a government that is both democratic and, at the same time, indifferent or hostile to religion. One solution is to do away with expansive government, but that does not seem likely to happen any time soon. Another is to set the government against the deepest convictions of the people—which convictions are inseparable from religion and upon which convictions the moral legitimacy of the government depends—and that is the abandonment of democracy. The latter is the course advanced, however inadvertently, by the extreme proponents of "strict separationism" between church and state—extremists such as Maddox, Lynn, and Thomas.

Neutrality that is Neutral

A personal note may be permitted. This writer formed much of his thinking on church-state relations during his many years as pastor of a large, black, and very poor parish in Brooklyn. Most of the members were on welfare and they supported the parish generously. The undeniable reality is that St. John the Evangelist—its preaching, teaching, worship, evangelizing, and every other aspect of its mission—was supported by public funds. Or, as the ACLU would have it, the church was "watering at the public trough" and "nonbelievers" were paying for a religious mission of which they undoubtedly would not approve. If one insists upon putting it that way, churches and ministries such as St. John the Evangelist are tax-supported religious institutions. Were we to follow through on the perverse logic of the extreme separationists, welfare recipients should be forbidden to give a part of their welfare check to such institutions. So far as we know, not even the ACLU has proposed that, although it would seem to be required by the principles that it espouses.

Were such a policy to be adopted, it would cripple, if not destroy, the already desperately struggling churches and religious agencies in our poorest neighborhoods. It would involve government policing of individual behavior in a way that would inevitably violate rights that, unlike free exercise rights, the ACLU does care about. It would result in a situation where welfare recipients would be permitted to spend government funds on liquor, lottery tickets, and pornography—on anything, in short, that is not constitutionally "tainted" by a connection with religion. For these and other reasons, the ACLU, Americans United, the Baptist Joint Committee, and Seventh-day Adventists do not propose a policy that would seem to be required by the separationist principles that they do propose. They would undoubtedly respond that, for many practical reasons, they do not want to "go so far" as to forbid welfare recipients to support religious institutions. Perhaps it is not too much to ask that they reexamine the principles that, consistently applied, require going so far.

An alternative principle is that the government should be truly neutral toward religion. If a government program advances a legitimate public purpose, as democratically determined, it is a matter of indifference as to whether it also aids religion. (We say public purpose rather than "secular" purpose, which is too often the language of the courts, and which too often implies hostility to religion.) Thus the public purpose of welfare payments is to provide a "safety net" for people who otherwise cannot make it. If such people decide that their individual and communal welfare requires the ministry of the church, that is their decision. Similarly with the instances cited by Mr. Thomas where the government assists sundry projects operated under religious auspices—in housing, day care, providing for the homeless, and higher education. If the sponsors of such programs intend (as we believe they should intend) that they should also advance their religious mission, that is a matter of complete indifference to the state. The government's interest, the public interest, is only that the programs help the people that they are

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intended to help.

Parents and Schools

And, of course, the same principle applies in education. As our law has long declared, the primary responsibility for rearing children rests with their parents. There is a necessary public interest in wanting children to be reared with the knowledge, skills, and habits that make for good citizens. The monopoly of public funds by government schools began in the early nineteenth century when our societal elites (Horace Mann & Co.) decided that the parents of the unwashed immigrant hordes could not be trusted to rear their children "properly." Backed by the coercive force of the state, the "common school" (later called the public school) took on the task of "Americanizing" the children of immigrants. Not surprisingly, Americanizing meant Christianizing, and Christianizing meant Protestantizing, and Protestantizing meant the doctrinally diluted Protestantism of cultural mandarins such as Horace Mann. (This curious story has been set forth in many studies, most recently by Charles L. Glenn in *The Myth of the Common School*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.)

The government establishment of the public school as our national church worked reasonably well—or at least it was politically sustainable—until the late 1940s. Then the extreme separationists, led by such as the formidable Leo Pfeffer, began to challenge, and challenge successfully, components of public education as an unconstitutional "establishment of religion." They were in large part right, of course. The bland Protestantism of the common school was an imposition upon many—upon Catholics and Jews most notably, but also upon Protestants of more particular conviction, as well as upon those who rejected religion altogether. The removal of religion and religiously based morality from the government school has not resulted in "neutrality" but in a religio-moral vacuum that is aptly described as the naked public classroom. Many contend, with considerable justice, that the vacuum has been filled with the quasi-religion of "secular humanism." All should be able to agree that the systematic exclusion of religion and matters associated with religion from the public school is not neutrality but hostility.

Is there anything that we systematically exclude if not for the reason that we are hostile to it? Almost everybody has a list of what should be excluded from the public school classroom, but the lists do not agree. For example: obscenity, Marxism, militarism, racism, homosexualist advocacy, eurocentrism, nativism, radical feminism, homophobia, and much more. Mr. Lynn says that the ACLU recognizes that such decisions "are value-laden, conceived within a sometimes clear, but more regularly cloudy, ethical framework." So who should decide? Which of the many clear and cloudy frameworks should be determinative? In education, it would seem that those who have the most immediate responsibility and greatest competence for the rearing of children should decide, namely, the parents.

If there is a public interest in the education of children (and there certainly is), and if there is to be public funding for education (which seems almost inevitable), public justice requires that the dollars follow the decisions of parents and children about what kind of education they want. This is an elementary claim of liberty, and Maddox, Lynn, and Thomas, together with a magazine titled *Liberty*, all claim to be great champions of liberty. Except when people use their liberty in ways of which they disapprove. Except when people elect an education informed by a clear (or cloudy) ethical framework that is religious.

In the case of the ACLU one can understand this, for it is an organization dominated by a militantly secularist ideology. Americans United is somewhat different. It used to be called Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, and there is perhaps a continuing anxiety about how Catholics and Jews might "abuse" the free exercise of religion by educating their children to be Catholics and Jews. But why the Baptist Joint Committee should be so set against helping people to school their children under Baptist auspices is something of a puzzle. Certainly many Baptists are puzzled, which is one reason why the Committee is increasingly isolated and ineffectual.

Is, then, the naked public square a "fairy tale"? We can let the extreme separationists answer the question. Messrs. Maddox, Lynn, and Thomas, along with the editors of *Liberty*, make very clear why the square is as naked as it is, and why, if they have their way, it will become more naked still. There is comfort to be derived from the fact that they raise their alarums in such a defensive mode, indeed in tones of desperation not untouched by hysteria. They seem to know that—socially, politically, and judicially—the tide is turning. What they see as a growing threat to what they mistakenly call "the Establishment Clause" others recognize as a renewal of democratic governance in which the state will no longer hinder but will, as the First Amendment promises, protect the free exercise of religion.

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AN ABORTION "COMPROMISE"

There is no denying that MacNeil-Lehrer is one of the better things on television, even with the frequently vacuous editorial opinings of Roger Rosenblatt that have become a regular feature at program's end. Rosenblatt, who makes the main part of his living with *Life* magazine, has recently published *Life Itself* (Random House). Among other things, it purports to tell us "how to end the abortion war." Rosenblatt writes: "In the 4,000-year-old history extending from the Greeks and Romans through the Middle Ages and into the present, every civilization has taken abortion with utmost seriousness. Yet ours seems to be the only civilization to have engaged in an emotional and intellectual civil war over the issue."

That is partly true. Large parts of the ancient world were as casual about abortion as about infanticide. The more pertinent truth is that the United States, as Judge John Noonan has pointed out again and again in connection with *Roe v. Wade*, is the only modern nation that has simply abolished abortion law altogether. But Rosenblatt is right about the civil war.

He is also right in noting the intense religiousness that has marked, and continues to mark, American public life. He is hard on the Catholic Church, which, he says, is "so agitated that it has entered into an unlikely, if not unholy, alliance with evangelical churches in the pro-life camp." He further notes that the great majority of Americans "in the middle" tend to resist the moral permissiveness that characterizes both the cultural elites and the underclass. He recognizes that the civil war could become more than just emotional and intellectual unless some solution is found. "The ideal solution," he writes, "would consist of a combination of laws, attitudes, and actions that would go toward satisfying both the rights of citizens and the doubts held by most of them."

By the "rights of citizens," he makes clear, he means the right to abortion. The objection that babies are being killed is what he describes as "doubts." As it happens, Rosenblatt believes that he has a solution. It is called "permit but discourage." This requires no change in the laws. He explicitly excludes "ideas like parental consent or notification, already the law in some states, which, however well-intentioned, only whittle away at individual freedoms." "Permit but discourage" means that abortion would continue as usual, but we would leave no doubt that we take it seriously and feel awfully bad about it. In terms of the legal and public policy battles over abortion, Rosenblatt's proposal to the pro-choice and pro-life antagonists is: Let's compromise and leave things the way the pro-choice people want them left.

Mr. Rosenblatt would likely object to that characterization. He insists that he really wants change. He writes: "The key element for all is to create social conditions in which abortion will be increasingly unnecessary. . . . Were we once again to work actively toward creating a country where everyone had the same health care, the same sex education, the same opportunity for economic survival, the same sense of personal dignity and worth, we would see both fewer abortions and a more respectable America." This is very touching, and promises an answer to almost everything. Name a social problem and people like Mr. Rosenblatt have a solution: Let's create a much better world and then the problems will go away. This is called "getting to the root" of whatever ails society. "Meanwhile," he tells us in effect, "pending the arrival of this proposed utopia, let's continue to do things my way."

The formula of "permit but discourage" should not be dismissed out of hand. The more comprehensive protection of the unborn does require more than changes in law and public policy. Changes in moral and cultural attitudes are at least equally important, and without them changes in law and public policy cannot be effected or sustained. Surely we can agree with Mr. Rosenblatt that it is better if abortion is treated seriously rather than frivolously, as though it were a matter of moral indifference. "Permit but discourage" is of little help, however, in addressing the question of "how to end the abortion war." There have been slight variations over the years, but the evidence is that about 20 percent of American adults believe abortion is murder and should be prohibited, and a somewhat smaller number favor the existing situation of abortion on demand. When asked the circumstances in which abortion should be permitted, approximately 75 percent of Americans say it should not be permitted for the reasons that 95 percent of abortions are currently obtained. In sum, the abortion war will be ended, if ever, when changes in moral and cultural attitudes are joined to legal changes much more protective of the unborn. If that is the case, Mr. Rosenblatt's "permit but discourage," while no doubt well intended, is little more than a liberal sentiment, an expression of regret over the alleged need to maintain the status quo.

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Condom Wars

Good news from the school condom front, or so it would seem. New York City—followed by San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles—has been giving out free condoms to high school kids who, as everybody knows, are "sexually active" anyway and therefore not susceptible to "preaching" about abstinence. Free condoms, the public was assured, would meet a compelling need in reducing the number of school children contracting AIDS and other diseases. After the first few months of the program in New York, reports are that the students aren't much interested.

In one high school of 2,900 students, "barely 20 condoms a week are requested." Barely 20, one may infer, probably means less than twenty. What's wrong here? The teachers and school counselors interviewed sound downright embarrassed about it. Says one 16-year-old girl, quite simply, "Most of us are not sexually active." The principal of the high school where the program has flopped so magnificently explains that maybe it is because kids have to study so much. The implication would seem to be that they are letting homework get in the way of sex. As has been pointed out in these pages, those who argue that "everybody is doing it" and therefore concern must focus on their doing it "safely" typically ignore the majority of teenagers who are not "doing it" (see "AIDS: Deadly Confusions Compounded," February). Even those who do not qualify as virgins usually are not "sexually active" in the routinely promiscuous manner portrayed by the condom champions.

Nor, according to the New York City report, does the non-demand for condoms indicate that large numbers of children are having sex without condoms. The same teachers and counselors say that the students are keenly attentive to, and seem to be persuaded by, teaching about the dangers of "unprotected sex." The conclusion at this preliminary stage would seem to be that high school students are much more sexually disciplined than the educational experts had so confidently claimed. Undeterred, the Board of Education has announced that it will continue to promote condom distribution throughout the system since, as everybody knows, it is futile to "preach abstinence" to kids who are doing it anyway. The "success" of the condom program depends upon students wanting condoms. It would seem to follow that the successful promotion of "safe sex" requires the promotion of sex. The New York report suggests that a large number of students who have other things on their minds are telling their sexually agitated teachers to cool it.

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Odd Alliances

According to some Washington beltway insiders, the multi-million dollar Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is one of the most effective pro-abortion organizations around today. It is the more effective, they say, because it is not officially pro-abortion. It is for defending children, and who can be against that? But it apparently is not for defending unborn children. And it seems equally cool to the possibility of adoption for the children of women who are not prepared to be mothers. So CDF opposition to "children having children" is, it is suggested, tantamount to promoting abortion. CDF, which is the creation of Marian Wright Edelman, a black woman of very considerable achievements, is funded by major foundations and corporations backing "abortion rights." Chairman of its board is Hillary Rodham, a zealous feminist who only recently has agreed to be identified as Hillary Clinton, wife of the Arkansas governor and presidential candidate. On issue after issue, it is noted, CDF vigorously backs the Kennedy-led Democratic left on child and family policies.

It is the more curious, therefore, that CDF seems to have a growing influence in shaping the posture of the religious lobbies in Washington—including the lobbies of evangelical and Catholic organizations—on such policies. It is noted that a formidable lobbyist now with CDF was for many years an executive with the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). The national organization of Catholic Charities appears to be on the friendliest terms with CDF. Such close collaboration with formally pro-life religious groups would be harder to maintain were CDF officially to proclaim the pro-abortion position that, say the same Washington insiders, "everybody knows" it in fact favors. Those who are of a mind to pay attention to their church's political witness in Washington might want to raise appropriate questions about the role of CDF. It does seem improbable that folk such as Marian Wright Edelman and Hillary Clinton really share the goals espoused by most evangelicals and Catholics when it comes to defending all children and strengthening the American family.

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HOLY ALLIANCES, HAPPY COINCIDENCES, AND PROVIDENCE

The sensationalized account by Carl Bernstein in *Time* magazine on the "holy alliance" between the Reagan Administration and the Vatican in overthrowing Communism has caused quite a sensation in some quarters. Stripped down to its facts, the report contained few, if any, surprises. That John Paul II and Ronald Reagan thought Communism a great evil was hardly a well-kept secret. Nor did they hide the fact that, unlike most leaders religious and political, they thought Communism was not a forever phenomenon with which the world had to make its peace. With the electric response to a Polish pope and the rise of Solidarity, there was an obvious coincidence of interests in pressing the weaknesses of the Communist regime.

A coincidence of interests is not an alliance. The breathless prose of *Time* notwithstanding, the meetings between Vatican and White House officials recounted in its story were in the normal course of relationships. As for the meeting between Reagan and the Pope in 1982, it seems quite natural that they would have discussed the fact that they had both just survived assassination attempts and agreed that God no doubt had a purpose in saving their lives. We would not downplay for a moment the role of this papacy in bringing Communism to an end in Poland, and consequently throughout the evil empire. While historians can be as stupid as anyone else, we fully expect that future history books will give high marks to both John Paul II and Ronald Reagan for their part in these momentous changes.

The truly frenzied left—the *National Catholic Reporter*, for instance—has seized upon the *Time* story with unbridled zeal. Now, according to *NCR*, it is finally revealed why the Holy See was so cool to Marxist insurrections and liberation theology in Latin America. Now we know why the Pope has been appointing conservative bishops in the United States. Now we can understand the Vatican's hostility to the liberationist version of "the preferential option for the poor." The reason is obvious: Under John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger, "a right-wing political option has been masquerading as the *magisterium* and has now been found out, exposed." Under the terms of the putative alliance, the Vatican took orders from the Reagan White House, even to the point, it is suggested, of letting the Central Intelligence Agency decide who would be appointed to the American episcopate.

What really galls *NCR* is that, under John Paul II, the Holy See abandoned its "evenhandedness" in dealing with Communism and the capitalist West. With earlier popes, the Church, says *NCR*, "tried to remain 'equidistant' between Stalinism and 'the free world.' " (The quotes around "free world" are worth noting.) John Paul II, on the other hand, thought that, between totalitarianism and freedom, the Church's witness and influence should be on the side of freedom, and the editors of *NCR* will not forgive him for that alleged deviation from papal policy. Pope John XXIII, they say, was able to "talk with both sides" in the global conflict. "He believed that the Soviets might actually become more human if you treated them in human fashion. He has been vindicated." (The reader will be forgiven for reading that statement more than twice in the hope of extracting from it something that approximates intelligibility.)

The *Time* account of the "holy alliance" is, all in all, celebratory. For *NCR* the story is the political equivalent of *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. The former is hype and the latter is hysteria. As best we can judge, the truth is that John Paul II and Ronald Reagan shared an understanding of the evil and the vulnerability of the Communist tyranny, and, each in his appropriate sphere of influence, acted courageously to bring that tyranny to an end. As a consequence, the world is a much, much safer place for freedom and other human goods. Of course the decisive factor, lamentably missing from almost all the discussions of these events, is Providence.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ With "Human Sexuality and the Christian Faith," the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) may be heading for a donnybrook similar to that which rocked the Presbyterians (USA) a while back. So says Pastor Leonard Klein of York, Pennsylvania, writing in *Forum Letter*. He and many others are of the view that the study document sent out by the ELCA has very little to do with the Christian faith and a great deal to do with dehumanizing patterns of sexuality. In language that has become tediously familiar in such documents, the study says that Christians must "dialogue with Scripture," and then goes on to assert that "we need to listen to the cries, fears, and joys of people" who have problems with what for many centuries were

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thought to be (mistakenly, it seems) Christian ethics. The most sensible thing to do, Klein concludes, is to chuck the entire enterprise.

"As is so often the case in contemporary biblical interpretation, no forest ever comes into focus from among the trees. It would, if we remembered that the authoritative witness of the whole canon of Scripture provides our direction. From the creation story to the splendid vision of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven as a bride adorned to meet her groom, the Bible assumes the glory and the norm of the heterosexual co-humanity of our kind. It calls the faithful to different vocations: some to sexual love of one who is disturbingly other and to the attendant parenting of children, others to the vocation of celibate service to the community and the Kingdom without those joys or burdens.

"Now, we're sinners and we mess this up right well, just like everything else. The ecstatic power and pleasure of sex are more than most of us can handle well. We sin. The church must deal pastorally and graciously with those whose struggle with *eros* does not go by the book. We provide the support, counsel, aid, and comfort of the church to those who have been damaged by the tortuous complexity, sins, and abuses for which our sexuality provide occasion. As forgiven sinners, we occasionally have a good laugh about the whole thing. This is not all that hard, folks. We didn't need a self-important task force to teach us this. In point of fact we didn't need the task force at all. We had all we needed already, lacking only the guts and brains to use it. The test now will be to see whether the church, particularly its ordained leadership and its bishops, will summon the courage and insight to reject the study and to do the right thing. Once again the right thing would be to 'just say thanks' to the committee and send them home. And to fire the prime movers."

■ The editors of a book that we briefly noted in a recent issue have taken us to task, and deservedly so. The book is *Political Order and the Pluralistic Structure of Society*, edited by James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy, and published by Scholars Press. The briefly noted was misleading on two scores. While the anthology does include substantial and welcome material from the Abraham Kuyper tradition of religious and social thought, it is by no means limited to that. Two additional sections of the book include a wide representation of readings in other Protestant as well as Roman Catholic social thought. Moreover, the price of the 421-page paperback edition is $24.95, not $34.95, which is not at all bad as books are priced today. In sum, we hope the editors will accept our apologies and others will accept our recommendation of this volume for libraries and for classroom teachers looking for a fine reader in Christian social thought.

■ Hollywood continues to do its part to promote euthanasia in the form of "physician-assisted suicide." A while back, for instance, there was the ABC film, "Last Wish," in which a daughter (Patty Duke) lovingly helps her mother (Maureen Stapleton) to kill herself. Despite enormous hoopla, the program did not even make the top twenty in the Nielson ratings, which may suggest that most Americans have a healthy resistance to having ideological indoctrination forced upon them. (Aside: A recent PBS documentary on Edward R. Murrow declared that "he had responsibility for the largest classroom in America." The hubris of such an assertion, that a nation of children is sitting at their feet awaiting instruction, apparently does not occur to the masters of the media.) In "Last Wish" the doctors and hospital staff are depicted as heartless technicians who care about nothing more than medically indicated "survival" at whatever cost to the patient. Richard Doerflinger of the United States Catholic Conference comments: "Ironically, however, the movie itself suggests one argument against legalizing physician-assisted suicide. If most physicians are anything like the insensitive brutes in this film, we shouldn't trust them to change the oil in our cars, let alone put new powers over life and death in their hands. But logic doesn't amount to much in the entertainment/propaganda business."

■ In a recent issue we referred in passing to the 30 million or more Catholics who attend Mass each week. Some folk who are in the religion numbers-crunching business tell us that, while nobody knows for sure, the figure is probably closer to 20 million. Thirty million plus, they say, would be accurate for *monthly* attendance. We have not counted recently and so are in no position to argue.

■ *Publishers Weekly* reviews, favorably, a book on the Gulf war that is titled *George Bush's War.* The author is described as one "who seems to have no political ax to grind." As we read on, we discover that his "findings" are "familiar but alarming." For "personal and political motives [Bush] dragged a reluctant military with him into war, played politics with Congress over the right to launch a war—and clearly exceeded his constitutional role in the process." The legacy of the war is disastrous, and it was all so unnecessary, for the author contends that Saddam "would have bargained a solution had Bush not kept insulting him and elevating him to a monster." The thing worth pondering is that the editors of *Publishers Weekly* probably do believe that the author has no political ax to grind, that he is simply giving an evenhanded account of the self-evidently true.

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■ James Wall, editor of *Christian Century*, flirts with the incorrect in a reflection on an article by Irving Kristol. Wall writes, "In the manner of fellow neoconservatives Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Novak, Kristol tends to have much greater confidence in the American Way than the biblical prophetic tradition permits. But to their credit, these three have consistently stood as enemies of secularism, the dominant faith of our culture." Why, thank you, Jim. But please, just how much confidence in the American Way does the biblical prophetic tradition permit?

■ The Baltimore Declaration is stirring a salutary stir among Episcopalians. It is a ringing affirmation of theological, moral, and missional truths that once identified what was called "the Christian tradition." Episcopalians all over the country are signing it by the thousands, and some have, rather ecumenically, called it a new 95 Theses. It seems the drafters of the declaration think the church should be at least as open to answers as to questions, and might even consider giving faith equal pulpit time with doubt. Where such revolutionary ideas are likely to take the church nobody knows, but Episcopalians (and others whose churches exhibit similar symptoms) could do worse than write Fr. Alvin Kimel (12701 Hall Shop Rd., Highland, MD 20777) and ask for a copy of the Baltimore Declaration. Be polite and send a dollar for his trouble.

■ Perhaps more so than among us, our British cousins are having little moments of truth in the aftermath of Communism's demise. In the *London Sunday Telegraph*, David Sexton reports on some public discussions. "Martin Jacques, editor of the recently extinguished journal *Marxism Today*, was struggling to find words adequate to the collapse of his life's work. He left the Communist Party last week, he admitted, after the revelations that the KGB had been funding it. 'This came as an enormous shock to me,' he claimed. 'If I'd ever suspected that that had been the case, I wouldn't have been a member.' " Then there is the case of Eric Hobsbawm, an intellectual stalwart of the left for many years. The chairman asked him very delicately, "I don't want to put you on the spot about this, Eric. . . but you are in a special position as having been a lifelong Communist and having your intellectual reputation [at stake]. It would be very interesting to hear one or two personal reflections from you about the situation as you now see it." Sexton reports: "At length Hobsbawm crept, gracelessly, up to an admission that the Communist system had been 'fundamentally flawed—because, if you like, of the absence of, not just the market but, if you like . . . well, let's put it like this, freedom.' " We like. The same week that we read that public television here had a somewhat less than candid program lionizing American Communists of the 1940s and 1950s and their fellow travellers as the persecuted idealists of liberalism in a hurry.

■ Boston University, at the instigation of its president, John Silber, has assumed management responsibilities for the Chelsea School District. One thing the School District decided to do was to distribute condoms to high school students in order to save lives threatened by AIDS. Edwin J. Delattre, dean of BU's School of Education, gave a speech urging that the decision be reversed. In the course of his remarks he cited the following report from the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*: "Dr. Theresa Crenshaw, a member of the national AIDS Commission and past president of American Association of Sex Education Counselors and Therapists told a Washington conference of having addressed an international meeting of 800 sexologists: 'Most of them,' she said, 'recommended condoms to their clients and students. I asked them if they had available the partner of their dreams, and knew that person carried the virus, would they have sex, depending on a condom for protection? No one raised their hand. After a long delay, one timid hand surfaced from the back of the room. I told them that it was irresponsible to give advice to others that they would not follow themselves. The point is, putting a mere balloon between a healthy body and a deadly disease is not safe.' " Delattre comments: "I want all of our students in Chelsea to know what is at stake here—and, above all, what lies in their power alone, not ours, to accomplish decisively in the way of saving lives. I want them to know that betting your life—or letting someone else bet your life—on a condom is a gamble that only one in eight hundred experts on sexual behavior is willing to risk, and that if our own students behave otherwise, they make a mockery of their stated commitment, expressed over and over again in this room, to saving lives. And I want all the students who have taken it upon themselves to distribute condoms in Chelsea High School to know that this is the gamble they have invited their classmates to take—and this, in a community where health officials themselves express fear over current levels of AIDS in the population." (For a copy of the complete address, write Dean Delattre, School of Education, Boston University, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.)

■ Controversy continues over Georgetown University's officially sponsoring a pro-abortion campus organization, "GU Choice." A number of Catholics petitioned James Cardinal Hickey of Washington, D.C., to lift the university's credentials as a "Catholic" institution, and the

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Cardinal has apparently passed that question on to Rome. Georgetown's president, Fr. Leo J. O'Donovan, defends the school's policy by arguing, inter alia, that the university supports other enterprises with which it disagrees, such as programs in Judaic and Islamic studies. The analogy, one might gently suggest, does not bear close examination. Meanwhile, other Catholic institutions are responding differently. The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, also a Jesuit school, has firmly turned down a student request that a pro-abortion group receive official sponsorship. After affirming the importance of "intelligent discussion and debate on issues such as abortion," the administration declared: "Nevertheless, Holy Cross wishes publicly to affirm and bear witness to Catholic Christianity's longstanding insight that all human life is sacred in the mystery of its origins and that abortion thus cannot be condoned. . . . The College, therefore, will not grant official recognition to any organization that seeks to or is perceived to advance a right to abortion, nor will it allow College funds to be used to such purpose." The conclusion is preceded by some curious ponderings about the need for the school "to be faithful to two important intellectual traditions"—that of the modern Enlightenment and that of Christian faith. (One might suggest that the idea of a Christian university encompasses what is legitimate in the Enlightenment, thereby making it part of the Christian tradition.) Nonetheless, a confused preface did not get in the way of a lucid decision that unabashedly declares that bearing witness is part of what it means to be a Catholic, even a Jesuit, school.

■ So why do some readers get more than one First Things promotion piece in the mail? (Some report getting three or four.) If you already are a subscriber, you shouldn't be getting any invitations to subscribe. We will not bore you with the technical reasons why there are complications. (The editors don't quite understand it themselves, although our very competent publication manager says it can't be helped.) But we do have a most definite suggestion about what to do with extra invitations to subscribe: pass them on to friends who should subscribe.

Sources: *Liberty* magazine on the New World Order and the Pope, November/December 1991. On condom distribution in schools, *New York Times*, January 30, 1992. On collaboration between the Pope and the Reagan Administration, *National Catholic Reporter*, February 28, 1992. Leonard Klein on ELCA sexuality report, *Lutheran Forum*, February 3, 1992. Richard Doerflinger on doctor-assisted suicide in *National Right to Life News*, February 4, 1992. James Wall on American neoconservatives in *Christian Century*, October 16, 1991. David Sexton on British Communists in the *Sunday Telegraph*, December 1, 1991. On GU Choice, *Crossroads*, November/December 1991, published by Holy Cross.

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Passing Port Royal
for Wendell Berry

I see the trees
you've seen and known
poised in mute witness
the baled hay hunched
like insatiable livestock
gnawing its way
back to the earth
the river muttering madly
its secrets swallowed
under the highway

you've walked the paths
I see between furrows
turning the soil
scattering seeds
your footing secure
as the ground gives way
and stood here nights
listening to the rain
its liquid tongues falling
into silence into life

I strain to hear it
the rain thudding gently
against the window
as the bus plummets onward
converting your land
to a slow motion movie
and I lean back a moment
into sterile comfort
nylon aluminum glass
before trying again

to see my reflection
across your beloved fields

Harry Newman

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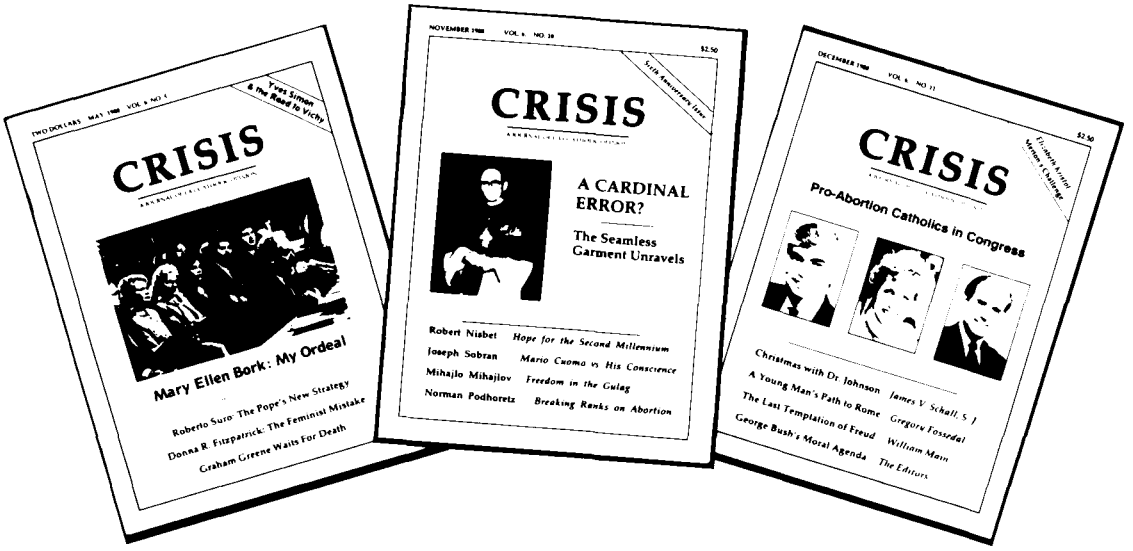
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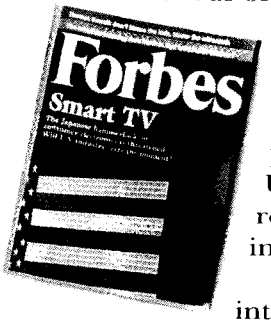

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